

KARAITES IN BYZANTIUM

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KARAITES
IN
BYZANTIUM

THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 970-1100

by

ZVI ANKORI

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To My Wife, My Companion

על כן הם אומרים לאחיהם בני יעקב: "למדו ודרשו וחפשו
וחקרו ועשו מה שיקום לכם בראיה קיימת ויעמוד בדעתכם."
*For this reason (the Karaites) say to their brethren, the
children of Jacob, "Study, and search, and seek, and
investigate, and do that which occurs to you by way of
solid proof and that which seems reasonable to you."*

Sahl ben Maṣliah the Karaite,
Epistle to Jacob ben Samuel

FOREWORD

THE RISE and early development of the Karaite sect have been in the focus of scholarly attention for more than a century.

Curiously, it was neither Karaite scholarship nor that of the non-Jewish world which shed most light on this fascinating religious movement, but rather its putative "enemies" among the Rabbanite students of medieval Judaism. Through such outstanding figures of nineteenth-century Karaism as Abraham Firkowicz and Mordecai Sultański, Karaite learning significantly contributed both to the new documentation and the opaque interpretation of the early history of that heterodoxy. But driven by excessive apologetic zeal, these Karaite savants intermingled pious forgeries with extant genuine records and developed utterly fantastic theories about the alleged origins of the Rabbanite "schism" in the days of Jeroboam. It was left, therefore, to the distinguished Rabbanite experts from Fürst and Pinsker to Poznański, Mann, and their successors to uncover more reliable sources, to unravel the historically authentic strains from the legendary accretions, and to reconstruct the successive stages of the history of that sect, a remnant of which, like the main body of Jewry, has to the present day successfully resisted the combined forces of outward assimilation and inner disintegration.

One important link in that evolution, however, has hitherto been sadly neglected. Most of the studies, understandably enough, were devoted to the rise and flowering of the movement in its Islamic environment during the eighth to the eleventh centuries. To a lesser extent the attention of linguists, anthropologists and historians, as well as students of religion, was attracted to the Karaite settlements in eastern Europe in modern times. But its all-important Byzantine phase has been subjected to few searching investigations.

The intriguing question, especially, why Karaism never succeeded in establishing itself under western Christendom, but founded a number of prosperous and intellectually creative centers under Greek Orthodox regimes, has never yet been given a satisfactory answer. Such an answer might open new vistas on Jewish history in Byzantium, perhaps even on the nature of Byzantine civilization as a whole. But it

cannot be seriously attempted before one marshals the basic facts concerning the beginnings of the Karaite settlement in the Eastern Empire and its subsequent communal, religious and intellectual growth.

Doctor Ankori has supplied that information through solid and painstaking research into all extant early sources. As a result, we can now trace this transition from Muslim to Byzantine rule back to about 970, that is more than half a century before the date hitherto accepted. Through his penetrating analysis, Doctor Ankori has also revealed the great historic forces (not always reflected in either the original sources or the modern literature with their primarily literary orientation) which brought about the establishment in Constantinople and other cities of vigorous Karaite communities side by side with the older Rabbanite settlements. Through a process of constant exchange, through mutual challenge and response, both segments of Byzantine Jewry reached new heights of intellectual achievement.

Jerusalem, August 11, 1957

SALO W. BARON

P R E F A C E

A P R E S E N T A T I O N O F early Byzantine Karaism needs no justification; it was long overdue. Here is a story of a society in transition. Geographically, the members of that society shifted from the Near Eastern regions to the harbors of Asia Minor and the banks of the Bosphorus. Politically and culturally, they exchanged the Islamic climate for that of a Christian state. Linguistically, they threw off the garb of Arabic, adopting Greek as the vehicle of daily communication and Hebrew as the language of their religious and legal literature. Psychologically, they forsook their erstwhile missionary ideal of a Synagogue Militant and, realizing they were doomed to the perpetual status of a minority within a minority, invested their energies in creative adjustment to the new environment they now called home.

Thus conceived, the vicissitudes of the Empire's Karaites may perhaps prove of much more universal appeal than is intimated by the title of this book. For, beside their intrinsic import for understanding the forces which propelled the only schismatic group still surviving in Jewry, they offer a fascinating case-history in socio-religious adjustment in general and a revealing example of political and cultural reorientation.

Nor must the geographic and chronological boundaries defined in the title be taken too rigidly. After all, the roots of the Byzantine processes were firmly sunk in the soil of eighth-to-ninth-century Babylonia and of tenth-to-eleventh-century Palestine, whereas their repercussions (enabling us, conversely, to retrace the decisive eleventh-century phases of these processes) reach out far into Turkish times and also embrace the later, East European extensions of the Karaite movement. Hence, several central problems of Karaite history in general had also to be taken up here at considerable length, inasmuch as they vitally affected our conception of the life story of Karaism in Byzantium. Such broader discussions seemed especially essential wherever new material or a novel interpretation of older data called for departure from prevailing views.

The book in its present form is an enlarged version of my Columbia University dissertation submitted in 1956. The accretions comprise my further studies on the subject in the years 1957 and early 1958. Literature which has come to my attention after the summer of 1958 could not, unfortunately, be included.

Taking leave of a work which was my steady companion for the last eight years makes me more mindful than ever of the heavy debt of gratitude which I owe to teachers, friends and institutions for their assistance and trust. My belated thanks go first to my parents, R. Eisig and Golda Wróbel, both of whom were literally my teachers for many years. Alas, they are no more here to see the fruition of their toil.

To my teacher and master, Professor Salo W. Baron, who guided my doctoral work and whose devoted efforts made the publication of this book possible, I owe more than I can say. His remarkable personality and unmatched erudition made the period of my graduate studies at Columbia University the decisive scholastic experience of my life.

I thank the Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation and its Board of Trustees for their warm interest and repeated manifestations of friendship. Were it not for the Foundation's generosity in meeting the cost of production, this volume would not have seen light in its present form.

My thanks go to my two great universities: to the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, at which I acquired the basis for my graduate work, under the guidance of my revered teacher, Professor Y. F. Baer, and to Columbia University, New York. My thanks go further to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, which launched me on my academic teaching career, and to its library staff, especially its former librarian, Doctor Gerson D. Cohen, for putting at my disposal the Library's rich collections of printed books and manuscripts, and for procuring for me microfilm copies of Karaite manuscripts from European libraries. I am also grateful to Doctor L. Marwick, of the Congress Library, Washington, D. C., for lending me his photostats of the Leiden MS of *Sefer ha-'Osher*.

My friends and former students, Messr. J. Erushalmi and J. Orendt, read parts of the first draft of the work; Miss F. Bramson read most of the final manuscript; and Mrs. H. Kummer read the last chapter thereof. To them all I am obligated for valuable suggestions with a view to improving the readability of the book.

Finally, I wish to extend my thanks to Mr. Benjamin Wruble, of Exeter, Pennsylvania, for making my study trip to the United States possible; and to Mr. Ben-Zion, the artist, poet and scholar, and to his charming artist-wife, Lillian, who made their Greenwich Village studio my second home in New York. Last but not least, in dedicating the book to my wife I wish to express my boundless gratitude to her for sharing with me the joys and hardships of all these years.

The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1959

Z. A.

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MAP OF *Expansion of Karaites in Byzantium* Frontispiece

KARAITES IN BYZANTIUM

INTRODUCTION

KARAISM WAS a product of Jewish experience under medieval Islām. The true scope and depth of Islamic impact on all the facets of Jewish civilization in the latter third of the first millennium C.E. is still to be told in full. Suffice it to observe here in a general way that the charged atmosphere of an expanding Islām was most propitious also for the rise of Jewish heterodoxy. The fresh breath of a flowering youthful Arab culture and the realistic attitude of Muslim rulers meant for normative Judaism the enrichment of Jewish communal and intellectual life; to Jewish sectarianism these factors meant life itself.¹

THE FORCES OF PROTEST

For, on the one hand, there was the living example of parallel *external* developments in the heterogeneous Muslim society and the growth of heterodoxies in Islām. On the other hand, *internally*, the forceful promotion of talmudic legislation by the central Jewish institutions under Muslim domination—the Gaonate and the Exilarchate—could not but call

¹ A general survey of Jewry's experience in its contacts with the Arabs through the ages was given recently by S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* (cf. on Karaism, esp. 172 ff.). The affinities of Jewish pre-Karaite sectarianism with Muslim heterodoxy have admirably been expounded by I. Friedländer in his "Jewish-Arabic Studies," *JQR* (N.S.), I-III (1910-12). Cf. also S. Poznański, "The Founders of Sects in Jewry during the Geonic Period" (Hebrew), *Reshumoth*, I (1918), 207 ff., which is similarly devoted to the early period.

A modern comprehensive history of medieval Jewish sectarianism, and of Karaism in particular, is an urgent desideratum. It would replace the antiquated and largely unreliable *Geschichte des Karäerthums* of J. Fürst. At the present, the masterly sketch by Poznański in *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 662 ff., is the best general survey available. Cf. also A. Harkavy's summary in *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, VII, 438 ff., and I. Markon's German account in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, IX, 923 ff. A brief introduction to Karaism is also given in L. Nemoj's recent *Karaite Anthology*, xiii ff. R. Mahler's Yiddish study, *Karaimer* (or, in Hebrew tr., *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*), constitutes a fresh and stimulating reinterpretation of the known data; its main thesis, however, cannot be accepted. Finally, against the background of general Jewish history in the High Middle Ages, Professor S. W. Baron has most recently devoted a great part of Vol. V of his revised *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (177-285, 373-416) to an incisive analysis of "Sectarian Trends" and of the "Karaite Schism."

The documentation of the present general remarks would inevitably transgress the limits of this Introduction. It therefore must be deferred to a separate, expanded

forth defiance in the distant peripheries of the Jewish Diaspora. Claiming to be the last link in an uninterrupted chain of oral transmission, the central Jewish administration, residing in Babylonia, considered itself the only legitimate heir and sole competent interpreter of that

study on the subject. Neither can the numerous monographic treatments of specific periods or aspects of Karaite history, as well as collections of pertinent texts, be enumerated here. They are abundantly cited all through the present work and listed in the Bibliography at the end of this volume. It may be of interest, however, to recall in this connection some references to the well-known theory of Sadducean-Karaite kinship as well as to mention some of the discussions on the relationship of Karaism to the Dead Sea Scrolls, since these are briefly alluded to in this Introduction and will not be taken up again in the succeeding chapters.

As for the first, cf. A. Geiger, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte*, II, esp. 53 ff. (also in English translation, by Ch. Newburgh, *Judaism and Its History*, 260 ff.); *Sadducäer und Pharisäer* (first published in Geiger's *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, II), 33 f.; *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel* (2nd ed., 1928), 106, 133, 139, 149, 152n., 167 ff., 178, 182, 420, 467 ff.; *Ḳebūṣath Ma'amarim* (ed. Poznański), esp. 60 ff.; S. Holdheim, *Ma'amar ha-Ishūth*, esp. 43 ff. and 117 ff.; B. Revel, *The Karaite Halakah and its Relation to Sadducean, Samaritan and Philonian Halakah*; as well as the monographic studies of Harkavy, Poznański and others, copiously referred to all through the volume.

For a discussion of Karaite relationship to the so-called Zadokite Fragments and kindred literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see S. Schechter, *Fragments of a Zadokite Work (Documents of Jewish Sectaries, I)*, esp. Introd., xvii ff., and notes to the Eng. tr., xxxvi f., xlviii, li; A. Büchler, "Schechter's Jewish Sectaries," *JQR* (N.S.), III (1912-13), 429 ff., and Schechter's "Reply" thereto, *JQR* (N.S.), IV (1913-14), 449 ff.; M. J. Lagrange, "La secte juive de la Nouvelle Alliance au pays de Damas," *Revue Biblique* (N.S.), IX (1912), esp. 332 ff.; L. Ginzberg, *Eine unbekannte jüdische Sekte*, 24 f., 76 f., and esp. 148 ff.; S. Zeitlin, *The Zadokite Fragments*, and numerous essays in *JQR* of the past ten years; Ch. Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents*, and *Qumrān Studies*, 86 ff.; P. Kahle, "The Age of the Scrolls," *VT*, I (1951), esp. 44 ff., and *Die hebräischen Handschriften aus der Höhle*, 60; G. R. Driver, *The Hebrew Scrolls from the Neighbourhood of Jericho and the Dead Sea*, 25 ff.; H. H. Rowley, *The Zadokite Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 21 ff., 81 f.; R. de Vaux, "A propos des manuscrits de la Mer Morte," *Revue Biblique*, LVII (1950), 417 ff.; S. Lieberman, "Light on the Cave Scrolls from Rabbinic Sources," *PAAJR*, XX (1951), esp. 402 f.; A. Dupont-Sommer, *Nouveaux aperçus sur les manuscrits de la Mer Morte*, 104 ff.; G. Vermès, *Les manuscrits du Désert de Juda*, esp. 105 ff.; J. L. Teicher, "The Dead Sea Scrolls: Documents of the Jewish-Christian Sect of Ebionites," *JJS*, II (1951), esp. 87 ff.; G. Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes*, 70 ff.; H. Grégoire, "Les gens de la Caverne, les Qaraites et les Khazars," *Le Flambeau*, XXXV (1952), 477 ff.; M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*; 41, 48 f.; H. L. Ginsberg, "The Dead Sea Manuscript Finds," in M. Davis (ed.), *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, 39 ff., esp. 47; S. Szyszman, "A propos du Karaïsme et des textes de la Mer Morte," *VT*, II (1952), 343 ff. (and Kahle's strictures against it, in *VT*, III [1953], 82 ff.); *idem*, "La communauté de la Nouvelle Alliance et le Karaïsme," presented to the 16th Congress of the International Institute of Sociology, 1954; N. Wieder, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Karaites," *JJS*, VI (1955), 14 ff.; *idem*, "The Qumrān Sectaries and the Karaites," *JQR* (N.S.), XLVII (1956-57), 97 ff., 269 ff.; and N. Golb's series of comparative monographs, of which two appeared to date (*JQR* [N.S.], XLVII [1956-57], 354 ff., and *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1-2 [1957], 51 ff.).

unique national experience: the lawgiving communication at Sinai. Consequently, it was resolved to force, if necessary, the rank and file of a far-flung Mid-Eastern Jewry into legal obedience and religious conformity with Babylonian tradition.

Of course, in the broader perspective of history, the overall effect of geonic and exilarchic activity on the subsequent evolution of Jewry and Judaism proved beneficial in the highest degree. Yet the contemporary day-to-day meaning of the administrative, fiscal and judicial implementation by lower officialdom of policies laid down by the central authorities must have had a different ring altogether. Especially the peripheries of the Diaspora (social and cultural peripheries, to be sure, no less than territorial) could partake very little of the boom that enveloped the expanding urban centers of the semi-capitalistic Caliphate in which the geonic academies and the exilarchic court resided. Cold facts of geography, not to mention abuses perpetrated by a mercenary bureaucracy and an unsympathetic, highbrow religious leadership, removed these regions from sharing in the economic prosperity and in the flurry of cultural activity with their brethren in the central provinces.

In an age in which religion was pervading all areas of private and public life, the ideological aspects of an opposition could manifest themselves only in religious nonconformity. Socially, the protest had to be shaped within a framework of religious sects or factions. Thus, the protest against the central Jewish authorities did perforce assume the form of opposition to the Oral Law which was embodied in the Talmud and effectively enforced by the exilarchic office and the continuous activity of geonic lawmakers. Indeed, regional customs, rites and observances persisted in the fringe areas of Jewish Dispersion in spite of their having been ordered out of existence by the levelling action of Babylonian talmudic legislation. In reaffirming adherence to these practices, the forces of protest would register their dissatisfaction with the exilarchic and geonic administration and repudiation of its legal and social policies which were identified with the talmudic legislation.

SURVIVAL OF KARAISM

Were it not for an independent line of development or, perhaps, for certain unique properties conditioned by a different sociological structure, the emergence of 'Anan ben David in the middle of the eighth century C.E. might have served merely as another rallying point for spokesmen of discontent in the Jewish community. Sects had been mushrooming

sporadically in the fertile soil of Jewish life under young Islām, from the latter part of the first Muslim century on. For the legal and spiritual mainstay of that life—the Talmud—though already strong enough to make its authority assert itself in ever-widening circles of the Diaspora to a point evoking resentment in some, was still too young to stifle all opposition. On a par with a host of other factions, then, Karaism might possibly have arisen and withered after a while without so much as leaving an authentic physical trace or a genuine literary testimony regarding its objectives and its very existence.

Indeed, of all the various shades of dissident opinion and action that are known to have loomed, at one time or another, on the Jewish horizon in Muslim lands, up to the present no first-hand record or testimony which would stem directly from the movements themselves has been recovered. The only evidence available is that which is locked in the hardly sympathetic literature of their Jewish opponents or in the hardly understanding accounts of Arab historians. These general descriptive references or even actual (fragmentary) quotations, cited only for the purpose of refutation, are captive witnesses of stormy gusts that were there and were dissipated in history.

In contrast to the utter disappearance of all sectarian groupings from the historical scene and of the striking absence of non-normative writings in the overall crop of medieval Jewish literature (at least, so far as that literature is known to us today), Karaism stands out as a unique phenomenon. It is the only dissenting group within Judaism that has survived, albeit in very small numbers, to our own times (not counting, for obvious reasons, the vestiges of Samaritans). It can also boast of an imposing record of literary creativity, the fruits of which have largely been preserved.

True, a great many Karaite literary productions, some of them of primary importance to the student of the sect's history, have fared badly in the course of centuries. Also (with very few exceptions) not until the nineteenth century did the Karaites make an appreciable use of the printing press. Hence, many a manuscript is still gathering dust in the recesses of forgotten *genizoth* and of major library collections, notwithstanding the intensive editing efforts of modern Karaite scholarship. However, this situation does not detract from the basic historical import of the survival of Karaism. Long after the conditions which had precipitated the initial outbreak of sectarianism in the medieval Jewish community had ceased to exist, and removed from the Islamic climate that was so conducive to the growth of dissident movements

in Judaism, Karaism lived on and expanded into new geographic and cultural horizons. True, it never succeeded in re-creating the erstwhile glory of its Palestinian Golden Age; but it cultivated and consolidated its literary achievements and institutions as best it could.

The phenomenon of Karaism's perseverance throughout the ages cannot but cause the student to ponder over the nature of things that have set the movement apart from other medieval Jewish sects and contributed to its survival. What were the new ingredients which Karaism introduced into the realm of anti-Rabbinic resistance and which have gained for it a permanent foothold on the stage of history? What novel twist did it lend to existing ideas of dissent that enabled it to score a decisive victory over all other brands of Jewish sectarianism? And, vice versa, why did Karaism fail to turn into a powerful factor in Jewish life in spite of its apparent vitality and its survival for twelve hundred years?

THE 'MONOLITHIC' LITERARY CONCEPTION OF JEWISH SECTARIANISM

Students of Karaism were largely guided by an interest in the *literary* expressions of the sect's ways and beliefs. Confronted with the absence of literary productions by non-Karaite dissenters, they saw in the upsurge of Karaite literary creativity, following the emergence of 'Anan, and especially in the rich output of the tenth- and eleventh-century Karaite center in Jerusalem, the true manifestation and fulfillment of Jewish sectarianism. Conceiving all medieval Jewish dissenters as one unit, they consequently made the three hundred years of Karaite literature preceding the Crusades serve as the pivot of sectarian Jewish history in general. The literary contribution of Karaite spokesmen, from 'Anan to the eleventh century, became thus the absolute criterion for defining values and comparative standards of non-normative creativity. In fact, all sectarian thought and action prior to 'Anan was accorded the role of "precursors" to Karaism. Conversely, such Karaite writings as were composed after the Palestinian Golden Age were granted a meaning and a cultural-historic value only insofar as they helped to elucidate and preserve (in Hebrew translation or through extensive quotations) the treasures of Karaite creativity at its Golden Age zenith.

With this literary orientation as compass, the life story of non-normative Judaism in the Middle Ages is usually divided into three chapters:

a) the four or five generations of so-called Precursors to Karaism, covering the pre-'Ananite movements of sectarian messianism. These

were the movements led by the rebel of Pallugta, by Abū 'Isā of Iṣfahān his disciple Yūdghān of Hamadān, Severus (Sarini?) and Mūshkān;

b) the rise of 'Anan ben David in the 760's C.E. and the subsequent three centuries or so of consolidation of Karaism. (Some would extend this period to include also the early Byzantine writers, ending with Yehūdāh Hadassī in the middle of the twelfth century.) To this chapter belongs the story of the brilliant expansion of Karaite scholarship, from 'Anan, through Benjamin an-Nahāwendi, in the early ninth century, to the al-Ḳūmisī school which ushered in the Palestinian period at the end of the same century. It was, however, in the tenth and eleventh centuries that the giants of Karaite literature, so divergent in their interest and temper, raised the standard of sectarian learning to heights never before attained and never to be reached again in later times: the worldly Ḳirḳisānī and the rabid Salman ben Yerūham; the ardent nationalist Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ and the universal philosopher Joseph al-Baṣīr; the objective master-exegete Yefeth ben 'Alī and the glorious Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdāh. Yeshū'ah was the last great spokesman of the Golden Age of Palestinian Karaism. As such he was credited with the distinction of having transplanted the sect's teaching from the worn-out soil of a declining Islām to fresh furrows of Christian Europe. This he allegedly succeeded in performing through the instrumentality of enthusiastic students and converts from orthodoxy to Karaism, among them some also coming from Byzantium. Into this period belongs, too, the bitter struggle of the Karaite sect with Saadyah Gaon. This struggle, as it is usually evaluated, had a fertilizing effect on Karaite literature for many generations to come. At the same time it contributed substantially to the awakening of Rabbinism and ultimately tipped the scale of Jewish destiny in favor of the Rabbinic way. And, finally,

c) the period of literary Epigoni. These were still in part creating in the Arabic-speaking lands of the East. In the main, however, the Hebrew-oriented centers of Byzantium (later Turkey) as well as of the Crimea and Eastern Europe became the guardians of the sectarian heritage. Subsisting on the vestiges of the classic Karaite creativity, these communities were inching their way down a weary eight-hundred-year path of decline, from the destruction of the Jerusalem center by the Crusaders, to our own day.

IN SEARCH FOR A CHALLENGE-AND-RESPONSE PATTERN

The social historian cannot, of course, conceive the emergence and spread of sects in Jewry in terms of dissident books or nonconformist

observances. Expositions of theological doctrines and literary records of scholarly pursuits are of the utmost importance. Yet, when utilized solely in their two-dimensional capacity, i.e., as pointers to the sectarian *way of life* and *philosophy of life*, they offer only the formal end-product of the dissenting process. The student of social history is interested in observing the process in its very making. He will search then for a third dimension, however imperceptible at first in the inherently conservative and (on the surface) purely technical and legalistic literature—a dimension that will reveal also the *dynamics of sectarian life within (or against) its normative environment*.

In brief: the need is now for an attempt to chart from the literary data at hand and from corroborating external evidence the overall challenge-and-response pattern and the mechanism of reactions and adjustments which propelled the sects, as *living societies of their time*, in relation to the material background and spiritual climate in which they originated. Similarly, it is imperative to follow them along the path of later *changes* of background and climate in which they strove to continue to live in accord with their convictions and their heritage.

Each generation is confronted with new challenges, and even in the same generation the challenge posed by certain factors has different meanings to different groups. These meanings will differ according to the social position of the members of these groups, their economic interests, their spiritual background, their intellectual awareness and psychological responsiveness. The above elements will consequently make the answers to the challenge vary with the different strata of the same society. *The multiplication of dissident movements in medieval Jewry, at times appearing in succession, at times simultaneously, should be viewed in terms of specific answers given by specific groups of people to problems and challenges confronting them. These challenges arose from specific experiences of these groups under the regime of the central Jewish institutions, at different junctures of the political and cultural history of medieval Islām.*

THE Umayyad Era: The Challenge of Turmoil

The early (pre-'Ananite) movements of messianic dissent were the answer of certain underprivileged segments in the Jewish population to the challenge of the Umayyad era—the challenge of turmoil. After having defeated the great powers, Byzantium and Persia, which were also the implacable foes of Judaism, the young Caliphate itself seemed to

have been foundering under the pressure of dynastic dissensions and religious feuds. Growing social and economic disparity and national unrest that encompassed such a great region as Persia threatened to undermine the foundations of the new Arabian Empire. Was not this turmoil the natural prologue to the last great drama of world history, long predicted by the Prophets and glowingly described by popular homilists? Was not the hour of Israel's Redemption at hand?

At the same time, a new internal situation within Jewry increasingly challenged the freedom and independent way of life of the faithful but unschooled folk in the back-regions of the Jewish Diaspora. For the conquests of Islām brought about the unprecedented unification of some eighty percent of the Jewish people under one political and cultural system. The two great traditional centers of leadership and scholarly endeavor—Palestine and Babylonia—were now united under one political control and were part of the same spiritual climate. This development prompted a swift rejuvenation and reshaping of the government-recognized central Jewish institutions, the Gaonate and Exilarchate, and the ever-widening assertion of the authority of the Talmud as the legal mandate of these institutions.

However, the rugged frontiersmen of the Persian borderlands shared very little in the economic upsurge and intellectual sophistication of their coreligionists in the growing cities. To them, forced centralization and legal-talmudic uniformity spelt fiscal, judicial and plain bureaucratic nuisance with few of the assets that such an organization was able to offer in the central regions. Parallel centrifugal forces which operated among their Muslim neighbors in the outlying provinces of the vast Caliphate could not but encourage the self-determination and defiance of Jewish dissenters on the outskirts of the Jewish Dispersion. No wonder then that all the leaders of the early sectarian Jewish movements came from these far-off regions.

MESSIANIC SECTARIANISM

The expected Redemption under the guidance of a militant messiah seemed to provide both an answer to the challenge and the opportunity inherent in the general political situation, and relief from the grip of the central Jewish authorities. Indeed, messianism and sectarianism during the early Muslim era march inseparably hand in hand in an endeavor to remold the fate of the Jewish people and the heart of that people as well.

The emergence, in the comparatively brief span of four generations

or so, not of one but several movements with a messianic sectarian ideology, is not difficult to understand. Possible differences in social composition (of which we have a faint inkling only); fluctuations in the political and military situation of the country, with tidelike rushes of confusion rising and receding; regional variations of environment, tradition and custom; and the element of personal appeal which is of paramount importance in a messianic movement—all lay at the root of this plurality of sectarian messianic answers to what seems in retrospect to have been basically one and the same challenge.

The story of how the sectaries actually fared in their struggle within Jewry and in their military adventures cannot be retold here. It is the aftermath of that struggle and the inevitable shift in challenge (resulting from change of conditions) that call for attention. The 'Abbāsīd victory and the ensuing period of peace and tranquillity which the Caliphate was to enjoy for several generations dealt a deadly blow to the movements of sectarian messianism. For these movements were inseparably woven into the pattern of events of the turbulent Umayyad era. They were geared with all the vitality of their belief and zeal to a particular historical situation and to that situation alone. They felt their way through a world of great changes without the guiding compass of a coherent system of national and religious thinking. Finally, they were imbued with a cult of the leader which compensated only little for their intellectual immaturity stemming from low social standing and poverty in legal and religious discipline. As such, the movements were incapable of recasting their objectives and regrouping their forces in keeping with the radical change around them. Theirs was *one answer to one challenge*, and any modification, let alone a drastic shift, in the nature of the challenge left them incapacitated beyond remedy. Their energy spent, their hopes uprooted, they were doomed to gradual decay if not immediate disappearance. For a time they carried on an insignificant existence on the margin of Rabbanite communities, nurtured by half-mystic and Muslim-tinged expectations of the eventual return of their respective leaders—a withering anachronism, of no consequence to the subsequent history of non-normative Judaism and of Jewry at large.

THE 'ABBĀSĪD CALIPHATE:

THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

Karaism differs from its predecessor movements in three important aspects: a) in the nature of the challenge that spurred it into existence;

b) in the character and direction of the answer it subsequently offered to the challenge; c) in the sociological structure of its membership which conditioned the form and content of that answer. Most important, the social composition of Karaism, different from that of earlier sects, endowed it with the ability of not spending itself, like its forerunners, in answering one particular challenge. Rather, similar to normative Judaism, the Karaite sect knew how to meet each challenge as it came along and to reemerge with modified answers to the problems of changing times.

Unlike the Umayyad era, the external challenge of the early 'Abbāsīd years (from the 750's on) was to the sectaries not one of national opportunity but one of disillusionment and frustration. The pacification of the country and the beginning of an era of unprecedented economic growth and cultural maturation saw the Jewish inhabitants plunge with relish into the high tide of 'Abbāsīd prosperity. To the sectaries, however, the new turn in the country's political fortune and the resulting victory of materialism and sober adjustment over puritanic self-denial and national separatism spelled the end of high hopes for immediate redemption through the somewhat crude messianism of yesteryears. At the same time, it bared the dismal spiritual poverty of the accumulated nationalist-sectarian enthusiasm which had no coherent, positive program to serve it as compass nor a leadership of rank to steer it through the crisis.

Internally, the rapidly progressing centralization and uniformity of Jewish life under the guidance of Babylonian institutions had carried the nation a long way from the situation which had originally stirred the simple folk of the peripheries into sectarian protest. Years of organization and solidification and the unrelenting efforts in the scholarly field and in public education did not fail to bear fruit. Moreover, with the economic and administrative consolidation of the Caliphate, the exilarchic and geonic authority, too, reached ever deeper into the outlying domains of the Jewish Diaspora. The speedy transfer by the 'Abbāsīd government of the nerve center of political, economic and cultural activity from Syria to the newly established capital city of Baghdād, in the heart of the traditional Jewish Babylonian settlement, invested almost automatically the Babylonian institutions with the right and duty to speak for *all* Muslim-dominated Jewry.

Conversely, the accumulation of power in the hand of exilarchs and geonim by force of external circumstances, in addition to the conscious efforts in this direction by Rabbinic leadership, heightened even more the traditional drive for expansion of Babylonian talmudic

hegemony over all the communities of the House of Israel. The spread of the authority of the Babylonian Talmud was a consistent corollary of the spread of 'Abbāsīd authority and of its accompanying cultural enterprise all over the Muslim world. Beginning with the 'Abbāsīd ascendancy in the middle of the eighth century, Yehūdai Gaon (said to have been the teacher of 'Anan ben David) and his disciples embarked on a high-pressure campaign to expurgate the Jewish way of life of non-normative coloring. Even Palestine with her long-standing independent tradition, and the provinces under her influence, were brought to task in no equivocal terms for not conforming to Babylonian talmudic law and custom.

PALESTINE VERSUS BABYLONIA

The struggle against the Babylonian-sponsored uniformity was by no means a sectarian monopoly nor even predominantly sectarian. Preservation of regional (mainly Palestinian) customs and way of life had lost now the edge of the simple man's rebellion and of purely sectarian separatism, although protagonists of Babylono-centricism would find it expedient to label it as such. In fact, such preservation of ancient traditions became the true symbol of regional, and especially Palestinian, self-determination, defended by the region's *Rabbinic* authorities as well. It did, however, have a sectarian extension also, whenever it epitomized not merely a defiance of the Babylonian Halakhah and the stress of traditionally Palestinian prerogatives but also a repudiation of the social and communal forces which represented that Halakhah and built on it their claim to power.

To be sure, the link between the campaign for Babylono-centric uniformity and the spread of Karaite activity had long been noticed. It has been, however, invariably suggested that precisely the rising menace of Karaism drove the geonim and their lieutenants (such as Pirḳoi ben Baboi at the beginning of the ninth century) to decry so harshly the deviations from Babylonian legal policy. In reality, the contrary is clearly apparent: far from *provoking* the Rabbanite drive for uniformity, early Karaism was (partly) a sectarian *answer* to the challenge of that drive, alongside the Rabbanite anti-Babylonian front. Indeed, the sectarian segment of opposition to the normative Babylonian pressure forms only a small radicalist collateral of the basic historical contest for supremacy in Judaism between the two major lines of Jewish development. At the time covered by our discussion, this contest was

soon to enter the stage of an open feud between Palestine and Babylonia, to be climaxed in the tenth century by the famous Saadyah-Ben Meir controversy and perpetuated many centuries later in the still-existing rites of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry.

At any rate, the time had come when mere adherence to scattered non-normative practices or the adoption of certain new pietistic ways, partly influenced also by heterodox Muslim neighbors, could not any longer answer satisfactorily in the mid-eighth century the twin challenge inherent in the changed situation. The failure of messianism called for constructive outlets into which the accumulated religio-national fervor could effectively be channeled. On the other hand, there was the increasing pressure of geonic and exilarchic institutionalism and of all that it stood for politically, socially and religiously. This pressure could be countered only by a brand of sectarianism which, like the doctrine of its Rabbanite opponents, was based on firm *scholarly foundations* and was guided by a leadership claiming *a standing in the Jewish society* comparable to that of the Rabbanites.

In brief: the challenge of Rabbinism had to be met with Rabbinism's own weapon, on terms which the Rabbanites had succeeded in inculcating into the Jewish way of thinking and the Jewish way of life, and at the locale of the Rabbanites' own seat of authority.

The early Karaite answer of 'Anan ben David was, indeed, in this vein.

'ANAN BEN DAVID

A forceful answer it was.

'Anan ben David led the forces of anti-Rabbanite rebellion out of the remote frontiers of the Muslim-dominated Jewish Dispersion into the heart of exilarchic and geonic dominion. Until that time open defiance was in evidence only in the outlying provinces of the Caliphate in which Muslim heterodoxy was thriving also. The appearance of 'Anan marks, so far as we know, the first case of such defiance in the very center of Rabbanite institutionalism and at the seat of central Muslim authority.

This geographic shift, in itself highly significant, brings into sharper relief some additional factors. These also make their appearance for the first time on the stage of Jewish sectarian history. For 'Ananite Karaism provided the non-normative cause with two elements which have established themselves as prerequisites of successful leadership; they were missing, however, all along in the earlier dissident movements. These

two elements were: a) aristocracy of Davidic descent, and b) aristocracy of learning.

As for the first: it was, indeed, with no negligible amount of pride that the Jew, politically subordinate, relished the perpetuation of the princely House of David as a Muslim-recognized semi-governmental agency. The office of the Davidic exilarch represented the interests of the Jewish people at the caliph's court and enhanced the prestige of the Jewish population. Even deposed exilarchs in exile were accorded their due share of veneration as the scions of the House of David. Davidic aristocracy was, of course, gradually to be overshadowed in the increasingly commercialized Islamic environment by aristocracy of wealth. The latter, indeed, controlled the community but never superseded Davidism. As late as the twelfth century, numerous branches of Rabbanite and Karaite Davidic pretenders, invested more with titles than with authority, would be adding welcome glamor to the communities of Baghdād and Fuṣṭāṭ, Damascus and Moṣul, and—prior to the Crusades—also Jerusalem. True, the burdensome and often corrupt machine of the exilarchic fisc and bureaucracy would not cease to be resented and denounced by some, whenever actual power of office endowed the title with concrete meaning and sometimes led to abuses. Yet the exilarchic institution as such, and Davidism in general, formed the unquestioned basis for leadership in Jewry in the early Muslim centuries.

The historicity of 'Anan's Davidic genealogy and of his eligibility for the exilarchic office seems to have been unduly impugned by recent scholars. Of course, the familiar Rabbanite story, which would explain Karaite rebellion merely in terms of a private vengeance by 'Anan for alleged geonic interference with his right to exilarchic succession, should rightly be rejected. No less correct are the reservations voiced by scholars concerning the later Karaite attribution of actual exilarchic authority to 'Anan. But, otherwise, there is no reason to doubt 'Anan's noble lineage and scholarly qualifications. The claim of his descendants to the patriarchial seat on the basis of their Davidic descent was never questioned even by their Rabbanite opponents. Nor were the merits of 'Anan's scholarly accomplishments ever doubted. Only his allegedly personal *motives* were denounced as the direct cause of estrangement between him and the acknowledged leaders of the people when the latter discovered his deviationist leanings. It would have hardly suited, so it seems, the interest of Rabbinism to attribute to 'Anan a non-existent record of Davidic extraction and a flattering level of Rabbinic scholarship only in order to point out how his supposedly base objectives

had perverted these positive features. Should it not have been simpler and more consistent with the tenor of medieval polemics to decry 'Anan's ignorance and low social origin, if such had been the case, on a par with Abū 'Īsā, the allegedly illiterate tailor, or Yūdghān, the cameldriver?

DIASPORIC ASCETICISM

'Anan's answer to the challenge of disillusionment with militant Palestino-centric messianism was national asceticism anchored in the Diasporic community of the pious. The high-tension nationalistic enthusiasm of the earlier movements was now sublimated into a long-range program of penance and strict adherence to the "original" ways and practices. The synagogue, a Temple in miniature (*miḳdash me'aṭ*), yet (unlike its ancient model) extraterritorial and universal, was to replace the messianic aim of territorial restoration. A detailed set of rules was established with the objective of imbuing the synagogue service with the closest resemblance to the ancient Temple rite. Psalms were the only liturgy to be permitted. Prostrations, ablutions and rigid norms of purity were to recall the idea of the Lord's ancient sanctuary. Priests, the only truly hereditary aristocracy of ancient Israel, were to be re-installed in their erstwhile glory. All this, of course, was to be accompanied by the most stringent and meticulous observance of the ancient customs—as preserved in the peripheries or in Palestine—and by other manifestations of "mourning" already encountered among earlier ascetics: refraining from consumption of meat of animals which once used to serve for sacrifices on the altar, prohibition of wine, etc. Indeed, there is some reason to believe that, whether as a matter of organizational necessity or as a part of the "sublimating" program of exilic mourning, 'Anan advocated some sort of *territorial self-segregation in the Diaspora* by the communities of the faithful, to prevent their being contaminated by contact with the impure.

This national program of 'Anan contained, as expected, many details which were common to all ascetic doctrines in Judaism. Yet the program was clearly different from the well-known ideology of the "Mourners of Zion" (*Abelē Şiyyōn*) which was adopted a century later by Palestino-centric Karaite nationalists of the al-Ḳūmīsī school. A recent attempt to reconstruct Karaism from the days of 'Anan down to the eleventh-century Jerusalem masters and "Mourners" as one ideological "Zionist" unit fails thus to perceive the basically Galutho-centric nature of 'Anan's

nationalism, conditioned by the challenge of the early 'Abbāsīd era—the challenge of peace and prosperity.

KARAITE HALAKHAH

The internal challenge which faced the sectarian camp—the challenge of Rabbanite scholarship—was answered by the first medieval sectarian *Book of Precepts*. This was a coherent, full-scale exposé by 'Anan of the deviationist practices and rites, documented by using the Rabbanite method of exegesis and by borrowing from the Rabbanites their rules of hermeneutics. Even the language of the book—Aramaic—was designed to give it the appearance of a counterpart of the Talmud. Indeed, the geonim were right in interpreting 'Anan's opus as not a mere extension of the earlier sporadic cases of factionalism, which they usually preferred to ignore. With keen insight they perceived in it a conscious endeavor by 'Anan to beat the Rabbanites with their own weapon and to counter the legal mandate of Rabbanite power—the Talmud—with “a Talmud of his own.”

In Chapter V of the present study, the early Karaite dialectics and hermeneutics will be discussed at greater length as background story for the changes which were introduced into Karaite legal concepts by Byzantine spokesmen of the sect. Suffice it to add here that 'Anan's widely heralded fundamentalism and exclusive reliance on the letter of the Written Law are largely a misnomer. Rather, his was an *ex post facto* attempt to *read into the Bible* (the full twenty-four volumes of it and not the Pentateuch alone) the customs and observances already practiced by the sectarians. Some of these practices could, of course, be traced to an ancient, discarded Halakhah. Some, however, could be squeezed into the letter of the Scriptures only by the most strained and bizarre hermeneutical devices. Especially the Muslim-influenced *heḳḳesh* (*ḳiyās*, i.e., analogical deduction), originally indebted to the Talmud, was perforce carried to the utmost extreme. An example of such an exaggerated use of analogy in the field of the Karaite law of incest will be discussed later in this volume. Its consistent application would have brought the Karaite community to the brink of self-strangulation, were it not for the reforms legislated by eleventh-century Karaite scholars.

A detailed listing of the points in which Karaite doctrine, as advocated by 'Anan and his followers, diverged from normative Jewish practice cannot, of course, be undertaken in the framework of this Introduction.

Many of the divergences will be discussed and documented in Chapters VI and VII of this volume, in connection with Karaite-Rabbanite polemics in Byzantium. In these chapters also certain legal modifications—a contribution of the Byzantine branch of Karaism to sectarian jurisprudence—will be cited against the background of earlier practice from the ‘Ananite days. Our task here is to chart only the broader outline of ‘Anan’s answer to the challenge of his time, and especially to stress the new intellectualist turn of this answer which set Karaism apart from its older sister movements.

LEADERSHIP OF INTELLIGENTSIA

The appearance of ‘Anan on the scene along with other *maskilim*, i.e., intellectuals, marks the crucial change in the composition of the forces of dissent in medieval Jewry. This change could not but leave a lasting imprint on the future character of Jewish sectarianism. The erstwhile rugged but naïve frontiersmen were joined now by conservative elements among the urban Jewish population of the central regions who viewed with alarm the spreading national complacency and the growth of an institutional machine in Jewry. Among them were also frustrated members of the lower aristocracy and disgruntled intelligentsia who gradually became the spokesmen of protest and laid down the scholarly foundations of the Karaite movement.

In this change lay Karaism’s strength over and above its sectarian predecessors. In it lay also its weakness.

By offering the people a sectarian ideology in the accepted formulae of scholarly legislation and by countering the claims of the normative administration, bolstered by its Davidic leadership, with a sectarian platform enjoying the auspices of Davidism also, Karaism carved for itself a permanent place in the Jewish community under medieval Islām. Indeed, it forced normative Judaism to rethink and reformulate its objectives, to reassert the premises on which the normative doctrine was based, and to bring its case to the people. Thus a rich literature was created and many new fields of study and research were thrown open for public discussion. More important, even the institutional separatism of the sect and the many points of ritual and practice in which it diverged from the Rabbanite majority were based on scholastic postulates common to all Jewry. Karaism thus remained always a party *within* the framework of the Jewish nation—a partner in its fate, a companion in its spiritual endeavor. This last point will be elaborated more fully in

Chapter I of the present study, when we lay down the "historical premises" on which the reconstruction of Byzantine Karaite history must rest.

THE SEEDS OF FAILURE

On the other hand, however, precisely in this overintellectualization of the sectarian appeal lay also Karaism's weakness and the seed of its ultimate defeat. The process of epitomizing the sectarian dissent, a primarily *social* phenomenon, in Rabbanite-patterned terms of *scholarly* formulation, tended to drain the dissident enthusiasm of its original *popular* vitality and forced the voices of protest into a framework of dialectical formalism. Karaism became a miniature sectarian replica of Rabbinism, geared inseparably to the Rabbinic development: fighting it, yet invariably following in its footsteps; rejecting it, yet imperceptibly surrendering its own identity to the opposite camp. In this contest with Rabbinism on Rabbinism's own ground, with *no new values* to offer to the Jewish people, 'Ananite Karaism was *a priori* doomed to remain a permanent minority within Judaism. Whatever rationale was to be offered later for this inevitable status of minority, the fact could not escape the keener minds among the sectarians themselves: Karaism, the way 'Anan had built it, was, at best, a whip to stir normative Judaism out of its complacency, but it never was to become the actual propelling power advancing the nation's cause as it marched through history.

It is this awareness of failure, inherent in 'Anan's method and national doctrine, that lay at the root of the unusually sharp disavowal of 'Ananite policies by a new generation of Karaite zealots who enthusiastically responded to the new challenge and opportunity of the ninth century. This awareness, too, was responsible for the change of direction apparent in the new appeal of the sectarian leaders of the ninth and tenth centuries to Diaspora Jewry. In that appeal the nascent Karaite leadership abandoned the national philosophy of 'Anan and addressed itself to the nation in the name of new (or renewed) values that would enrich Jewish life.

The "de-'Ananization" of the movement by the al-Ḳūmisī school and its successors till about the eleventh century could not pass unnoticed by scholars. It was minimized, however, as merely interesting for the light it shed on al-Ḳūmisī's character. Its broader historical implications were left largely unexplained.

SHADOWS FROM THE PAST

Karaite revival in the ninth century became also an issue in the now-popular discussion on the subject of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of Kara-

ism's relationship to them. A detailed investigation of the problem cannot, of course, be expected in this connection. Only a few general impressions are in order here.

Ever since the famous century-old theory of Geiger linked the early Karaites with the internal conflicts of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, scholars did not cease to detect ancient antecedents in Karaite ideology. Geiger and his successors hailed the Karaites as spiritual heirs, nay, actual survivors, of the seemingly extinct Sadducee party. On closer analysis, however, Sadduceism in its classical definition seems to have played in the Middle Ages the role of a haunting historical recollection rather than an actual source of influence, an amorphous symbol of dissent rather than a definitive sectarian identity.

On the other hand, Karaite links with other marginal groups of the time of the Second Temple are becoming increasingly apparent. The confrontation of Karaite literature with ancient literary fragments, first yielded by the Cairo Genizah some half a century ago and now brought into an ever sharper focus by the fascinating discoveries in the Judean Desert, demonstrates several important points of contact. Indeed, the resemblance appears so striking in some aspects that certain scholars, both forty years ago and now, have found sufficient comparative material to build up a case for Karaite authorship of the said documents. The fact that such a theory, whatever one thinks of its merits, was at all possible points to an unusual affinity which cannot be shrugged off by the objective researcher. Evidently, precisely these cave-sectarian compositions (so-called "Zadokite" and not "Sadducean," although the Hebrew knows no distinction between the terms) were to some extent available to medieval readers almost a millennium after their first appearance.

Whether the ancient work or works were circulating all along among interested nonconformists or reached them only as late as the ninth century, is still debatable. The latter thesis, recalling a spectacular discovery of a cave which was reported for the beginning of the ninth century under circumstances resembling very much the recent revelations at Qumrān, is now quite popular with many serious students in the field. Yet, it still leaves many questions unanswered and can by no means be taken as the last word on the matter.

What seems plausible is that spokesmen for the Karaite movement, which was well in progress in the ninth century, were eager to avail themselves of extant bits of ancient sectarian Halakhah, whether known all along or discovered just recently. This Halakhah was proving helpful

in the scholarly documentation of their already-defined position and added a respectable stamp of antiquity to ideas of their own day.

NEW BEARINGS

Whatever the impact of ancient literature on Karaite revival in the ninth century, the great upsurge of sectarian activity could not have been the result of literary influence alone. Rather, it came in response to a realization of the fact that a vital change of direction was needed if sectarianism was to survive the counterpressure of militant Rabbinism.

Normative leadership in Babylonia, awakened to the danger of sectarian subversion in its own home while campaigning for the extension of Babylonian jurisdiction over all provinces of the Jewish Dispersion, must have struck back with all its force. Pirḳoi ben Baboi, Naṭronai Gaon and others moved swiftly to mend the damage. Geonic and exilarchic Babylonia became an impregnable citadel of Rabbinism. All that the famous decree of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (825 C.E.) could offer to the cause of Jewish separatism, when allowing any ten men to form a sect of their own, was a legal framework for future activity. An important technical gain it was, no doubt; one that could materially weaken the communal controls of the central Jewish institutions. Nevertheless, it by no means carried a guarantee for automatic success. It was an opportunity, not a victory.

For the real contest, the *contest of values*, would have to be fought out from within. In that contest, 'Ananite Karaism, anchored to a Babylono-centric orientation and slavishly imitating Rabbanite scholarship, had simply no chance. Even the new garb and the partial reformulation of 'Anan's doctrine by Benjamin an-Nahāwendi—using Hebrew instead of Aramaic and elevating the study of biblical exegesis to the rank of a major discipline—were unable to launch the movement in a new direction, so long as it was oriented on Babylonia and its eastern provinces.

But there was Palestine, the champion of regional determination, the symbol of erstwhile glory. And there was the Bible, the *Hebrew Bible*, which was claimed to be the basis for Karaism's independent legislation. Here, then, lay the new sectarian solution, the new road to the future, the renewed set of values to be presented by the sectaries to the people: a national appeal for the restoration of the Palestinian center and its hegemony over against Babylonian institutionalism, and, coupled with it, biblical scholarship which would be directed toward a better understanding of the Written Word and toward mastering of the *Hebrew* language,

the Divine vehicle of Revelation. Whatever the earlier, sporadic contributions of Benjamin an-Nahāwendī to biblical exegesis, the Palestino-centric school of al-Ḳūmisī was the first to produce full-scale Hebrew commentaries on entire books of the Bible. Thus, Rabbanite Babylonia, the seat of the “two wicked women” (i.e., the two geonic academies) would be countered by the God-chosen Mount of Zion; the Babylonian Exilarchate would be challenged by the Karaite Patriarchate in Jerusalem; and Babylonian talmudic scholarship of the geonic schools would be topped by biblical exegesis and masoretic studies emanating from Karaite Palestine.

PALESTINO-CENTRIC ORIENTATION

This new, consciously Palestino-centric orientation of Karaism was the ninth century’s sectarian answer to the Babylonian Rabbanite challenge. It was diametrically different from the Galutho-centricism of an ‘Anan. It indeed fought the ‘Ananites (i.e., the conservative adherents of ‘Anan’s policy) no less bitterly than it fought the Rabbanites. (Similarly, Saadyah Gaon would later fight the Rabbanite Palestino-centricists of the Ben Meir school with no less persistence than he fought the Karaites.)

The rejuvenated nationalist Karaite movement became a lever for tremendous activity. Appeals by word of mouth and through “Zionist” epistles called for speedy immigration to Palestine. “Scoundrels in Israel” and the “rich of the Diaspora” were bitterly denounced for arguing that “it is not our duty to go to Jerusalem until He shall gather us together, just as it was He who had cast us abroad.”

It is incumbent upon you who fear the Lord to come to Jerusalem and dwell in it [pleads al-Ḳūmisī with the Diasporic die-hards] in order to hold vigil before the Lord until the day when Jerusalem shall be restored Hearken to the Lord, arise and come to Jerusalem, so that we may return to the Lord. Or, if you will not come because you are running about in tumult and haste after your merchandise, then send at least five men from each city in the Dispersion, together with their sustenance, so that we may form a consolidated community to supplicate our God at all times upon the hills of Jerusalem.

Indeed, as will be noted in Chapters I and VII of the present study, later Karaite recollections of sectarian settlement in Jerusalem always spoke in terms of an “exodus,” of compact *groups* leaving behind their riches and their families and settling in Jerusalem as a prerequisite for future redemption.

THE JERUSALEM CENTER

The new Karaite Palestino-centricism should not, of course, be construed merely as a shrewd device to ensnare into the sectarian net the natural

pro-Palestinian sentiments of the people. There was genuine love of Zion in the Karaite appeal for the strengthening of the Palestinian settlement. Many of the Karaite settlers adopted the pietistic mode of life of the ascetic Order of "Mourners of Zion" (*Abelē Šīyyōn*). As we know now, al-Ḳūmisī was in fact the first among Karaite scholars to use this originally Rabbanite term. So great was the Karaites' appeal and so true their self-identification with the Palestinian cause that "mourning," an ancient Rabbinic practice, gradually became synonymous with Karaite allegiance.

The late 870's provided the sectaries with an even greater opportunity to seal the process of equating Karaism with Palestino-centric nationalism. The energetic governor of Egypt, Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, threw off in 878 C.E. his nominal bonds with the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate and extended his independent rule over Syria and Palestine. This situation lasted till 905, and the Karaites made the best of it. Aided by their powerful brethren in Egypt, they succeeded in establishing a government-recognized administration in Palestine—a counterpart of the Rabbanite Exilarchate which had enjoyed the recognition of the 'Abbāsīd rulers. It is probable, in fact, that they made themselves masters of Jewish Jerusalem and caused the Rabbanite academy to be transferred to Ramlah.

It is at this juncture that Saadyah, later a gaon of Babylonia but at that time still in Ṭūlūnid Egypt, appeared on the scene of history as the arch-foe of Karaism.

SAADYAH GAON

Saadyah's role in the Rabbanite struggle against Karaism has been variously interpreted by different scholars. While some would credit him with warding off the danger of "Karaization" of all Jewry, others would consider precisely his attack the decisive factor in uniting and consolidating the otherwise weak and scattered sectarian forces. However, none of these interpretations fully explains the unrelenting animosity and contempt with which Palestinian Karaites treated Saadyah's very name and his arguments. The anti-Saadyan campaign of the Jerusalem masters endured even long after the death of the gaon. It was inherited afterwards by the Byzantine disciples of the Palestinian center and inculcated by them into subsequent Karaite literature till as late as the nineteenth century. This persistence of hatred is remarkable indeed, especially since, as we know now, Saadyah was neither the first nor the last to attack Karaism, nor indeed did he combat the sectarians to such an extreme as was originally supposed by nineteenth-century students.

It seems that the "Saadyah-complex" of the tenth- and eleventh-century spokesmen of Palestino-centric Karaism can be understood partly in the context of the basic conflict between the cause of Palestine, as championed in its sectarian garb by the Karaites, and the cause of Babylonia, as advocated by Saadyah. Living in the political and spiritual climate of Ṭūlūnid Egypt, the future protagonist of Babylonian hegemony was aware of the danger of Karaite ascendancy. This danger did not express itself (as usually supposed) in Karaite literary creativity. The Karaite literature of Saadyan times could not effectively compete with Rabbanite creations. It was precisely *after* Saadyah that the greatest Karaite works were composed in the realm of biblical exegesis, Hebrew linguistics and philosophy. The danger of Karaism lay in the equation of Karaite counter-institutionalism with the cause of Palestine in her contest with Babylonia. Saadyah, who did not hesitate to strike hard at Palestinian Rabbinitism too, when, as in the feud with Ben Meir, the interests of Babylonia were at stake, considered it even more imperative to discredit the sectarians in all areas of their creativity so as to undermine the popular appeal which their Palestino-centricism carried with the rank and file of medieval Jewry.

DAWN OF BYZANTINE KARAISM

We have thus reached the Golden Age of Karaite scholarly creativity and the peak of Karaite communal endeavor. It is here also that Byzantine Karaism appears on the scene. The literary accomplishments of the Golden Age of Palestinian Karaism form the most-known and most-studied chapter in the history of the sect. Not so the story of the social relations within the Palestinian Karaite community of that time. A comprehensive analysis of the currents and undercurrents in the Karaite society of the tenth and eleventh centuries, and a reevaluation of the literary developments in the light of the internal struggles within that society, will have to be presented in a different connection. However, many of these aspects are taken up all through this volume, for they are inseparably intertwined with the story of Karaite settlement in Byzantium.

Precisely when Palestinian Karaism was at the height of its spiritual development and when its broad intellectual activity carried it away from its original, somewhat narrow nationalism, great changes on the international scene in the second half of the tenth century brought upon many Karaite communities abroad a challenge of a completely new nature. For the first time in the history of medieval Jewish sect-

arianism, Karaism, the product of an Islamic climate and now fully Arabicized so far as the language of its daily communication and literary expression was concerned, has been transplanted into the soil of a Christian nation. Serious problems of adjustment and acclimatization made the revision of many aspects in the Karaite outlook on life a matter of urgent necessity. This was a time that cried out for wise and understanding leadership, and for faith and devotion to the ancient heritage. A new chapter in the life story of the sect was about to be written.

BYZANTINE KARAITE HISTORY—A STORY OF ADJUSTMENT

The Byzantine Karaite story has never yet been told. Although literary creations of Byzantine writers were copiously utilized in order to shed light on the history of their Palestinian masters, their own vicissitudes and struggles were not made the subject of autonomous investigation. The present study marks the first effort to reconstruct the formative years of Byzantine Karaism.

Here is not an exposition of Byzantine Karaite literature, although all available compositions, many of them still in manuscript form, were consulted. It is the story of a group of people thrown into a new environment and struggling to adjust themselves to it without losing their identity. These were not hosts of militant missionaries, bent on ideological conquest of the Rabbanite community, but immigrants to new shores coming to grips with problems unknown to their ancestors.

Yet, the story of their adjustment, of their failures and triumphs, is not only the story of the local Byzantine community. In their struggles and achievements the foundations were laid for the story of Karaism in general in the last millennium, for the story of the still-living sectarian communities of Turkey, Russia and Poland. For Byzantine Karaism was not only the great guardian of the sect's heritage after the collapse of the Palestinian center under the assault of the Crusaders. It was also the sect's reformer in the changed conditions of changing times.

The seeds of crucial reforms that were to be introduced some centuries later into the body of Karaite law and practice; the foundations for the sect's stubborn survival and the sorry symptoms of its weakness and eventual decline—all are manifest already in these early formative years of Karaite existence on Byzantine soil.

HISTORICAL PREMISES

THE ORIGINS of Karaite settlement in Byzantium and the incipient stages of its growth and communal formation, until the time when it reached articulate maturity, are shrouded in mystery. So, too, the beginnings of many a Rabbanite community remain obscure in the ever-growing expanses of the Jewish Diaspora in the Middle Ages. Unlike the latter case, however, the silence of official papers and of Greek historians, polemicists and hagiographers, continues unabated even later on. This is true also where Karaite congregations appear to have already sent firm roots into Byzantine soil and even in documents that refer specifically to Judaism and the Jews.¹

THE SILENCE OF GREEK RECORDS

Admittedly, a text of the abjuration formula stipulated by the Greek Orthodox Church for Hebrew converts to Christianity may possibly be an exception. Dated in the year 1027, it is essentially identical in language and content with older texts of this kind. Where it diverges, however, we can detect a conspicuous, though inconsistent, slant toward non-normative Jewish observances and terminology.²

¹ The *regesta* pertaining to the story of the general Jewish settlement in Byzantium in the period covered by the present volume have been conveniently assembled by J. Starr in his *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*. Included there, of course, are also the references to Byzantine Jews, culled from Greek and Eastern histories and hagiography, as well as imperial legislation pertinent to different aspects of Jewish life. My own study of these primary historical sources did not yield any additional material of consequence and diverges only in matters of emphasis or interpretation. These matters will be listed further on, whenever relevant to our exposition, and, more broadly, in a separate presentation of the general history of Byzantine Jewry. Cf. also S. Krauss, *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdischen Geschichte*.

² Cf. V. N. Beneshevitch, "On the History of the Jews in Byzantium, VI-X Cent." (in Russian), *Evreiskala Mysl*, II (1926), 197-224; Greek text, 305-18. Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 173 ff., No. 121, and, earlier, Krauss, "Eine byzantinische Abschwörungformel," *Festschrift i Anledning af Professor David Simonsens*, 134 ff. A closer analysis of the document from the standpoint of its Karaite affinities is given in Chapter VI of this study.

Whatever the implications of this fact, there is still not one *explicit* reference in the Byzantine Greek sources to the Jewish sectarians proper nor to their institutions and position within the Empire's heterogeneous population. We have no hint even of their very existence on the banks of the Bosphorus or in the imperial Themes of Asia Minor in the span of time covered by the present study. Records from subsequent centuries are equally mute.

KARAITE LITERARY SOURCES

Nor do the Karaites themselves provide the student with material that could properly qualify as historical. The only two letters of an early Byzantine Karaite leader preserved and published to date were composed outside the boundaries of the Late Roman State.³ Lacking direct *documentary* evidence from the early dissident communities in the Empire, the reconstruction of the sectaries' own testimonies about their initial steps in Byzantine territory must necessarily be limited to two sources: casual historical references that may be culled from the early *literary* productions of Byzantine Karaite scholars, and *traditions* preserved in the writings of later Karaite authorities.

Literary monuments, however, did not make their appearance on the Byzantine scene before the middle of the eleventh century. Yet, as we shall see presently, Byzantine Karaism at that time was already firmly established. Consequently, the literary material of the period reflects a late stage in Karaite settlement and not its beginning.

Moreover, our picture of the early literary efforts of the young sectarian branch on the Bosphorus is still very incomplete. The full range of their contribution as source material for Byzantine Karaite history can hardly be gauged from the printed matter in the hands of the student

³ One letter, sent by Tobias ben Moses, a Karaite of Constantinople, from Jerusalem to Fustât, Egypt, was published for the first time by J. Mann in his *Texts and Studies*, I, 383-85. The other, composed most probably by the same writer, when in Egypt, and directed to a notable of another Egyptian community, appeared as Nos. XXXI and XXXII of Gottheil-Worrell's *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, 142-49. Mann later added some corrections, *op. cit.*, 373 f., note 3. Both letters were reedited and reinterpreted in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses the Karaite of Constantinople," in J. L. Blau and others (ed.), *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 1-38.

For a résumé of the literary activity of Tobias ben Moses see S. Poznański, *Ošar Yisrael*, V, 12a-14a. To the bibliography listed there one must add the references scattered through the two volumes of Mann's *Texts and Studies*; cf. Index, at the end of Vol. II, 1591, s.v. "Tob. b. Moses, Kar. scholar."

as of this day. This applies even to the greatest work of the period. In spite of its unwieldy method and form, Yehūdah Hadassi's encyclopedia of Karaite lore and polemics, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, is perhaps the most widely quoted manual of Karaite ways and beliefs. It was long acclaimed as an inexhaustible treasury of early texts and discussions and as the definitive record of spiritual achievement by four centuries of Karaite endeavor.⁴ Nevertheless, it is available only in a defective and, by any standard, highly inadequate edition.⁵ In the interests of modern Karaite scholarship, the work must be critically reedited by an expert in sectarian as well as Rabbinic Halakhah and exegesis, on the basis of all the extant manuscript material.⁶

ON BYZANTINE KARAITE MANUSCRIPTS

A pseudo-historical presentation of the origins of the religious schism in Jewry is the only other work of this era published in full. The brevity of the tract no doubt facilitated its inclusion *in toto* by Pinsker in his epoch-

⁴ Cf., for instance, J. M. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, II, 352; J. Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 211 ff.; P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 1; M. Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, 352; A. Harkavy, *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 442a.

⁵ The Gozlow edition of Hadassi's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, published in Czarist Russia in the year 1836 under the supervision of Abraham Firkowicz, admits that self-censorship was exercised in regard to the sections dealing with Christianity. Bacher published two of the missing chapters, from letter *kāf* of Alphabet 98 to the same letter in Alphabet 100. Cf. *JQR* (O.S.), VIII (1895-96), 431-44. Alphabets 312 and 313, also omitted from the printed book, were published recently by A. Scheiber in the *Jubilee Volume in Honour of Bernhard Heller*, Hebrew section, 101-29.

To be sure, whole passages were already unavailable to the scribe of the manuscript underlying the Gozlow edition (on the deficiency of the *Eshkol* MSS as early as the fifteenth century see note 13, below). Moreover, several clauses with an anti-Christian slant were tampered with or removed altogether, with no appropriate note indicating the change. Thus, against the 54 "signs of the Messiah" listed in the closing chapters of the printed book, both the Vienna MS and that of the Jewish Theological Seminary, as well as the MSS of Afendopolo's Hebrew epitome and of a later Arabic Fihrist, contain a description of 77 "signs." Twenty-three have been tacitly withdrawn from the printed copy of the text and the accompanying mnemonic formula camouflaged accordingly. A critical edition of that important section, contemplated more than seven decades ago by P. F. Frankl and unfortunately prevented by his untimely death, will form part of this writer's separate study on Hadassi and his time.

Cf. also G. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan MSS in the British Museum*, 183, §593; A. Z. Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften in der Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, 138 f., §130; and the data given by A. Marx in *JQR* (N.S.), XXIV (1923-24), 78 f.

In the preparation of the present volume the study of the printed version of the *Eshkol* was supplemented by consulting all the above-mentioned MSS at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, as well as a microfilm copy of the Vienna MS.

⁶ I understand that Professor A. Scheiber of Budapest is contemplating such an

making collection of Karaite texts, printed almost a hundred years ago.⁷ The earlier and larger creations of eleventh-century pioneers of Byzantine Karaite literature have not been as fortunate. The compilation in the last century of the great descriptive catalogues of European manuscript collections drew the attention of the scholarly world to these writings. Still, while a handful of researchers have occasionally presented excerpts from them, the body of this material remains largely unpublished to this day.⁸

In addition, some of the known manuscript copies are incomplete or anonymous, and the rich collections of Leningrad and Moscow are inaccessible at present. Thus, many a prospective editing project is denied material prerequisite for a comparative apparatus.

edition. In addition to the essay mentioned in the previous note, see also his "Elements fabuleux dans l'Eshkol Hakofer," *REJ*, CVIII (N.S., VIII, 1948), 41 ff.

A comprehensive study on Hadassī and his work is yet to be written. P. F. Frankl intended to lay ground for such a study in a series of "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 1-13, 72-85, 268-75, XXXII (1883), 399-419, XXXIII (1884), 448-57, 513-21, but the task was left unfinished. Cf. also his earlier "Aḥarē ReSheF le-Baḳker be-Sifrūth haq-Ḳara'im" (Hebrew), *Hashshaḥar*, VII (1875-76), 646-50, 701-13, VIII (1876-77), 29-31, 78-80, 119-27, 177-84.

See further on Hadassī, Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē Qadmoniyoth*, 223-25, App. XI, 92-94, 139; A. B. Gottlob, *Biḳqoreth le-Tholedoth haq-Ḳara'im*, 172 f.; A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 56; M. Schreiner, *Der Kalām in der jüdischen Literatur*, 33-35; W. Bacher, in the article quoted above, note 5, and in "Jehuda Hadassis Hermeneutik und Grammatik," *MGWJ*, XL (1896), 14-32, 68-84, 109-26; Porges, "Buchstabe Wāw bei Menachem ben Saruk," *MGWJ*, XXXIV (1885), 95 f., 100 f.; Perles, "Jüdisch-byzantinische Beziehungen," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, II (1893), 575; D. Rosin, "The Meaning of the Mnemonic Formulae for the Radical and Servile Letters in Hebrew," *JQR* (O.S.), VI (1893-94), 494 f.; Harkavy, *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*, 162, 212 f., and passim; Hirschfeld, *Literary History of Hebrew Grammarians and Lexicographers*, 75 f.; Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 68-72; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Palestine*, 55 f.; and the references cited in notes 4 and 5, above.

⁷ *Ḥillūḳ haq-Ḳara'im we ha-Rabbanim*, edited by S. Pinsker in his *Likḳūṭē Qadmoniyoth*, App. XII. 99-106. An excerpt from the work had earlier been published in J. Trigland's *Diatrise de Secta Karaeorum*, 101 f.

On Elijah ben Abraham, the author of the *Ḥillūḳ*, see Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 72 ff., §32, and the authorities cited there.

⁸ The following are major Byzantine Karaite compositions which have been excerpted on various occasions but still await full publication:

(1) *Oṣar Neḥmad* on Leviticus by Tobias ben Moses, of which only the commentary on the first ten chapters is extant in Oxford. Excerpts from the work were published by A. Neubauer in the *Bodleian Catalogue*, I, 57 f., §290; S. Poznański, *JQR* (O.S.), VIII (1895-96), 697-98; *idem*, *REJ*, XXXIV (1897), 181-91, and XLIV (1902), 186; J. Mann, *JQR* (N.S.), XV (1924-25), 374-77, §4.

(2) An anonymous compilation on Exodus and Leviticus (to be referred to as the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymus*). A collection of excerpts from this eleventh-century work was prepared for Pinsker by A. Firkowicz from a St. Petersburg MS and published in *Likḳūṭē Qadmoniyoth*, App. VII, 71-76.

On the other hand, the eclectic nature of Byzantine Karaite literature, coupled with the sorry state of modern research in the field of Karaism, makes the intelligent utilization of the writings that *are* available doubly precarious. The Byzantine recensions consist mainly of Hebrew compilations, if not actual translations, of the classics produced in Arabic during the Golden Age of Karaite learning (X–XI centuries). They must therefore be checked carefully against the early sources. Only in this way can the demarcation line be determined between older material of Palestinian mentors and the original contribution of Byzantine disciples.

This arduous task is far from completed and will tax the patience and ingenuity of specialists in the field for many years to come. So long as the Arabic originals are not fully edited, the student cannot help treading on slippery ground.⁹ However, some of these originals were superseded at an early stage by their Hebrew counterparts. With the decline of Arabic-speaking centers of Jewish culture, they seem to have become irretrievably lost. Caution is therefore essential. Nevertheless, the possibility of error in interpretation must not prompt us to deprecate

(3) Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher* on the whole Bible. The section containing a commentary on the latter part of the Scripture, from Jeremiah to the end (with the exception of Psalms), was edited by Firkowicz from a St. Petersburg MS and appended to his edition of *Mibhar Yesharim*, a biblical commentary by Aaron ben Joseph available only up to the closing chapters of Isaiah. Pinsker excerpted the Pentateuch part of *Sefer ha-'Osher* in *Liḳḳūtē*, App. VIII, 83–86. Cf. also M. Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, App. II, 384. L. Dukes excerpted the section on Psalms in *Literaturblatt des Orients*, X (1849), 12. The full text of the book is now being prepared for publication by L. Marwick from a MS in the Leiden University Library.

(4) *Yehi Me'ōroth*. A St. Petersburg fragment of this *Vorarbeit* by Yehūdah Hadassi to his great encyclopedia was communicated by Pinsker in *Liḳḳūtē*, App. XI, 94–97. Pinsker, however, mistakenly attributed it to Tobias ben Moses.

In his *Texts and Studies*, II, 100–102 (App. VI), and 110–16 (App. X), J. Mann included also two extracts from commentaries on Psalms which possibly are of Byzantine provenance. There is indeed a definite link between Mann's first fragment and *Sefer ha-'Osher* or the source used by the latter. The texts are otherwise too fragmentary to serve as a basis for any rigid conclusions in regard to Byzantine Karaite history.

A comprehensive study of the *full* text of the three voluminous commentaries of Byzantine origin—*Ošar Neḥmad*, the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous*, and *Sefer ha-'Osher*—underlies many of the conclusions reached in the present work. This study was made on the basis of photostats and microfilm copies of the original MSS, now in Oxford and Leiden.

⁹ One example of an historical inference, drawn from a Byzantine Hebrew compilation and shown to be erroneous after subsequent confrontation with the Arabic original, will suffice. On the basis of a comment in *Sefer ha-'Osher* on the Book of Daniel in which Christian conquests in Asia Minor are hailed, S. Munk and J. Jost concluded

the body of Byzantine Karaite material and to relegate its compilers to the rank of mere epigoni to the masters of classic-Karaite Arabic literature.

BASHYACHI AND THE RECONSTRUCTION
OF BYZANTINE KARAITE HISTORY

The second source—traditions preserved by later Karaite authorities—is, in effect, Elijah Bashyachi, the “last codifier” of Karaite law.¹⁰ Writing at the end of the fifteenth century, he credits the eleventh-century Tobias ben Moses with introducing the late Palestinian brand of Karaism into the Byzantine Empire.¹¹ Subsequent Karaite writers and modern scholars have all accepted this assertion at face value.

However, a closer scrutiny has shown it to be devoid of genuine tradition.¹² Bashyachi’s view was merely based on an inference from the defective texts available to him. Owing to the ups and downs of Byzantine Karaite literature in the course of four centuries, these texts were inadequate, as was in the late fifteenth century Karaite learning in general.¹³ Our inquisitive sectarian scholar, of necessity a disciple

that the commentary was composed in the time of the First Crusade. Pinsker has proved, however, that the allusion was taken over verbatim from the Arabic commentary on Daniel of Yefeth ben ‘Ali. The tenth-century Palestinian Karaite exegete was obviously referring to contemporary successes of Byzantine arms in Asia Minor and Syria under the command of Nicephor Phocas. Cf. *Liḳḳūṭē Qadmoniyyoth*, App. VIII, 80–81. The full Arabic text of the commentary was edited later, along with an English translation, by D. S. Margoliouth, *Anecdota Oxoniensa* (Semitic Series), I, Part 3. See the references to it in the succeeding chapters of this study.

¹⁰ Concerning Bashyachi see in general I. Markon, *Enc. Jud.*, III, 1130–32, and L. Nemoy, in his introduction to an English selection of Bashyachi’s writings, *Karaite Anthology*, 236 ff. Cf. also my Hebrew sketch on the Bashyachi family and on the movement of Karaite-Rabbanite rapprochement in fifteenth-century Turkey, in *Ensiḳlopedyah ‘Ivriṯh* (Enc. Hebraica), IX, s.v., 956 ff.

¹¹ Cf. Bashyachi’s *Iggereth Gid han-Nasheh*, preceding the Gozlow edition (1835) of his great code *Addereth Eliyyahū*. (That section of the book is unpaginated. Our passage is in the fourth column of the first leaf.) The *Iggereth* appears neither in the first edition of the *Addereth* (Constantinople, 1530–31) nor in its latest printing (Odessa, 1870).

¹² For quotations and full discussion of the crucial pronouncement by Bashyachi and for a critical evaluation of the authenticity of traditions reported by that sage, consult my Hebrew essay, “Elijah Bashyachi: An Inquiry into His Traditions Concerning the Beginnings of Karaism in Byzantium,” *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955–56), 44–65, 183–201.

¹³ The deterioration of Byzantine Karaite MSS in the late Middle Ages can be gauged, for instance, from the poor condition of the one and only MS of Hadassi’s

of Rabbanite masters, had to supplement his knowledge of the history of his own sect by ingeniously extracting information from biased Rabbanite sources.¹⁴

Bashyachi's belated adventures in reconstructing Karaite history may thus be interesting for the light they inadvertently shed on the desperate position of Karaism in the Turkish-conquered provinces of Byzantium at the close of the Middle Ages. They are, however, of little value to the student in search of clues to Byzantine Karaite beginnings.

EARLY RABBANITE AUTHORITIES

To be sure, scholarly writings of the Rabbanites, in the period in which Karaite settlement in Byzantium can logically be expected to have started, also fail to supply us with actual information about their adversaries. We shall look in vain to Rabbinic literature for direct indications of the geographic distribution, population numbers and communal strength of the Karaites in the area under consideration, or in any other part of the Jewish Dispersion. Defenders of Rabbinism have spilt much ink on anti-Karaite polemics ever since the original geonic policy of ignoring the schismatics altogether was abandoned. But the Rabbanites were not concerned with describing their Karaite contemporaries or their history. Characteristically, the legalistic and

Eshkol hak-Kofer in Constantinople. This was already reported to be incomplete by Shabbetai of Pravado, who copied the book in 1482, and by Kaleb Afendopolo, who compiled an epitome thereof in 1497. See Shabbetai's account in Frankl's "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 271 (cf. Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, 48-49), and Afendopolo's Introduction, *Naḥal ha-Eshkol*, 1c-d, preceding the Gozlow edition of Hadassi's work. Cf. also Frankl's review-article of *Likkūṭē* (in Hebrew), *Hashshahar*, VIII (1876-77), 182, where the inferiority of manuscript material is similarly held responsible for another chronological error committed by Bashyachi.

The decline of Karaite learning is deplored by Shabbetai, *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 270-71, and, a century later, by Yehūdah Tishbī in his introduction to Aaron ben Joseph's *Kelil Yofi*, 1st edition (Constantinople, 1581), 1b, 2nd edition (Gozlow, 1847), 2a.

¹⁴ On the indebtedness of Turkish Karaite intelligentsia to Rabbanite mentors, see H. J. Gurland, *Ginzē Yisrael*, III; S. Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thogarmah*, I, 47 ff.; A. Danon, "The Karaites in European Turkey," *JQR* (N.S.), XV (1924-25), 311 ff.; S. Assaf, "On the History of the Karaites in Eastern Lands" (in Hebrew), *Zion*, I (1936), 218 ff. For illustrations and explanation of motive behind the ingenious Karaite method of interlinear reading in biased Rabbanite literature, see my Hebrew essay on Bashyachi, cited above.

On the social implications of the close relations between members of Karaite intelligentsia and bourgeoisie and their Rabbanite neighbors (especially Sephardi immigrants) in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Turkey, see Mahler, *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 278 ff., and my aforementioned "Bashyachi" (Hebrew), *Enṣiklopedyah 'Ivrith*, IX, 956 f.

exegetic differences of opinion as well as invectives and rejoinders of a general partisan nature won the day. Historical considerations, if any, were limited to accusations concerning the origin itself of the sect and the allegedly shadowy motives of its founders, with no specification whatsoever in respect to the present.¹⁵

Indeed, as late as the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century, a Rabbanite homilist, Tobias ben Eliezer, was still given to attacking the views of Karaite commentators with the usual trite references to the standard issues of Rabbanite-Karaite controversy; these references did not even hint, however, at his personal contacts with the sectaries on a local level.¹⁶ No wonder that the earlier nineteenth-century scholars mistakenly placed Tobias in Germany, where Karaism was physically unknown. No wonder, too, that they had no difficulty in explaining away his anti-Karaite allusions as mere theoretical considerations. They suggested that these clichés came to him through familiarity

¹⁵ It would take us too far afield to list here, even partially, the anti-Karaite literature composed by medieval protagonists of Rabbinism. The study of that literature and of the Karaite rejoinders to it filled the lifetime of scholars like Pinsker, Harkavy, Poznański, Markon, Mann, and others. Suffice it to mention here L. Ginzberg's *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 504 ff., and B. M. Lewin's essay in *Tarbiz*, II (1930-31), 383-405, on Pirḳoi ben Baboi; S. Poznański's "The Anti-Karaite Writings of Saadiah Gaon," *JQR* (O.S.), X (1897-98), 238-76, and *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*; A. Marmorstein's "Spuren karäischen Einflusses in der gaonäischen Halacha," *Festschrift A. Schwarz*, 455-70; and, in general, S. Assaf, *Teḳūfath hag-Ge'ōnim we-Sifrūthah*, 117-249. Cf. also, for later authorities, P. Weis, "Abraham ibn Ezra and the Karaites in the Halakhah" (in Hebrew), *Melilah*, I (1944), 35-53, II (1946), 121-34, III-IV (1950), 188-203; E. Neumann, "Maimonides and the Karaites" (in Hungarian), *M. Bloch Jubilee Volume*, 164-70.

For the medieval Rabbanite statements dealing with the origins of the Karaite movement and with its early leaders, see Naṭronai Gaon in *Siddūr Rab 'Amram Ga'ōn*, ed. Warsaw (1865), 38, ed. Jerusalem (1912), II, 206 f.; the account attributed to Saadyah Gaon and quoted in the Karaite tract *Ḥillūḳ haḳ-Ḳara'im we-ha-Rabbanim*, in Pinsker's *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. XII, 103; the general historiographic excursus in Yehūdah Halleṽi's *Kūzari*, Ch. III (H. Hirschfeld's Eng. tr., 2nd ed., 187 ff.), in which Karaism is traced back to the times of the Second Commonwealth; and, finally, the story given by Abraham ibn Daūd in *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, edited by A. Neubauer in his *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 63 f.

Cf. also J. Trigland, *Diatribē*, 101 ff.; A. Harkavy, "Zur Entstehung des Karaismus," appended to H. Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden*, 3rd ed., V; *idem*, *Istoricheskie Ocherki Karaimstva*, I and II, and "Anan der Stifter der karäischen Sekte," *Jahrbuch für Gesch. und Lit.*, II (1899), 107-22; S. Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 161-87, XLV (1902), 50-69, 176-203; and, of recent studies, R. Mahler, *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 124 ff.; L. Nemoy, "Anan ben David, a Re-appraisal of Historical Data," *Semitic Studies in Memory of I. Löw*, 239-48, and his introduction to a selection from the writings of 'Anan, in *Karaite Anthology*, 3 ff.

¹⁶ Tobias ben Eliezer's arguments against Karaism have been partially assembled by S. Buber in his Introduction to Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Genesis-Exodus, 34 f. [17b-

with the writings of Saadyah Gaon, the arch-foe of the dissident movement, or through possible encounter with living Karaites and their literature on a visit to the Holy Land.¹⁷ Little did the scholars realize that Tobias' polemic reflected an actual threat which the Karaites posed to his own community in Byzantium.

THE TWELFTH-CENTURY TESTIMONIES

It was not before the second half of the twelfth century that specific data on localities containing a Karaite community alongside the Rabbanite population were deemed by the Rabbanite traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, worthy of inclusion in his invaluable *Itinerary*. He was the first to give us figures of the Karaite inhabitants in these communities, two of which were within the boundaries of the Empire.¹⁸

At the same time, a Rabbanite polemicist presented what purported to be a historical account of the rise and fall of Karaism in his native Spain.¹⁹ The rather mechanical assumption that Karaism, when establishing itself in Byzantium, had taken a course analogous to that reported by Ibn Daūd in regard to the Iberian peninsula, has strongly colored subsequent conceptions of Byzantine Karaite beginnings down to this day.²⁰ The acceptance by the scholars of Ibn Daūd's account was unfortunate. The undeniable bias of the partisan chronicler of Toledo²¹

18a]. Cf. our bibliographical note below, Chapter VI, n. 30. Cf. also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 216 f., 252. Details and quotations of Tobias' literary struggle are given below, Chapters VI–VIII. Similarly, see my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 19–25, XXV (1956), 166–173.

¹⁷ The opinion of S. L. Rappaport, followed by L. Zunz, H. Graetz, M. Steinschneider and J. Fürst, is cited and refuted in Buber's Introduction to *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Genesis-Exodus, 18 ff. [9b ff.]. A. Jellinek, too (*Commentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liede von R. Samuel ben Meir*, Introd., xii), refers to Tobias as "the Exegete of Mainz."

¹⁸ See the report of Benjamin of Tudela (in the 1160's) on the Karaites of Constantinople and Cyprus, in his *Sefer Massa'oth*, ed. Asher, Hebrew Section, 23, 25; Eng. tr., 55, 57. Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 231 f. (No. 182) and 35; Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 98. See more on the subject further on in this study, Chapters III, IV and VII.

¹⁹ Abraham ibn Daūd in *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 79 f. Cf. the reference in *Yohasin*, ed. Filipowski, 215b, as emended by J. Loeb, *REJ*, XVI (1888), 226, as well as the latter's "Notes sur l'histoire des Juifs (2)—Les Caraites en Espagne," *REJ*, XIX (1889), 206–9. Cf. also the reproduction of Ibn Daūd's account in *Ḳiṣṣūr Zekher Ṣaddiḳ* by Joseph ibn Ṣaddiḳ, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 93.

²⁰ Cf., for instance, J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 3. See the latter section of my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955–56), 189 ff., where this conception is discussed and refuted.

²¹ Cf. *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 78: שלא פסקה הקבלה

and his obvious oversimplification of the Karaite story in his own country make him an unreliable witness even for the history of Karaism in Spain,²² how much more so in regard to the movement in Byzantium.

Were we to rely solely on the almost monolithic presentation of twelfth-century world-Jewry in his *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, we would never guess the thriving existence of a Karaite community in the Empire. According to contemporary statistics by Ibn Daūd's own compatriot, the Karaites in the capital alone accounted for one-fifth of the total Jewish population.²³ Yet Ibn Daūd ignores Byzantine Karaism completely. Indeed, he goes even further and states smugly that the Jews of the Byzantine territories are *all* of Rabbanite persuasion and "submit to the authority of the mishnaic and talmudic sages." Furthermore, he dismisses even the flourishing Karaite communities of Egypt and Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries as insignificant in number and influence.²⁴

The Genizah documents uncovered in the past fifty years have proved to what extent such statements of Ibn Daūd are an expression of wishful thinking rather than a reflection of the actual facts.

FRATERNITY OF FATE

Many factors were, of course, responsible for this conspicuous lack of data that would normally fall under the heading of the "political history" of the Karaites, and it would take us too far afield to analyze them all here. Considering the limits of our present inquiry, it is sufficient

ושלשלת הקדושה שלה ואילו במינים אין אתה מוצא כן, שהרי ענן הרשע ושואל בנו, שם רשעים ירקב, תלמידיו של רב יהוראי צוקל היו וחלקו עליו בלא שום טענה בעולם, אלא מפני הקנאה שהיתה בהם ואינם יכולין לומר כן אנו מקובלים מפי פלוני... אלא שהם בודים מלבם, נשמתם בניהנם ישחקו עצמותיהם ועוד סימן שלישי יהיה בידך: And on p. 81 (i.e., in addition to the fact that the Karaites have no tradition to rely upon and are numerically unimportant) שמהינים לעולם לא עשו שום טובה לישראל, ולא ספר שיש בו חוק תורה או דבר חכמה ואפילו שירה אחת או פיוט אחד או נחמה אחת, כי כולם כלבים אלמים לא יוכלו לגבוח... ואילו ברבנים אתה מוצא שלשלת הקדושה שהוכרנו, וחוצה לה אלפי אלפים חכמים קדושים... כולם חכמים גדולים וקדושים ומחויקים ידי ישראל בשירות ונחמות על אלו נאמר וזר צדיק לברכה. ועל המיגין נאמר שם רשעים ירקב phrase:

²² Indeed, Pinsker had already reached the same conclusion, although for different reasons than those enumerated in my article. Cf. *Likḳūḳē*, App. (Note X), 171.

²³ Benjamin of Tudela reported 2,000 Rabbanites and 500 Karaites in Constantinople. The ratio 1:4 remains the same whether the given figures denote individuals or households. The German translation in the Grünhut-Adler edition of the *Itinerary* reads "800 Karaites." Cf. the references in note 18, above. It is, however, very likely that Benjamin was referring only to the concentration of the members of a Jewish guild in one of the boroughs of Constantinople. We have no data as to the percentage of Karaites among the Jews living in other parts of the city. See on it Chapter III, below.

²⁴ *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 79: וכן בכל האיים שבים יין מן ארץ נבקריו ונגנת עד ארץ: וקטנטנינה רומי הגדולה וכל ארץ תוגרמה ואשכנז וצרפת וכל ארץ פוליא ומניסטיא ואי סיקיליא וארץ

to reduce our observations and analysis of the Karaite story within the framework of general Jewish history to four phenomena. They, in turn, will serve us, in the absence of documentary evidence from the Empire proper, as guiding premises for a reasonable hypothesis on the historical course of Karaite settlement in Byzantium.

Of these phenomena, not the least in importance was the consciousness of both Karaites and Rabbanites that each branch does not really lead a separate political life of its own.²⁵ Indeed, though divided on matters of ritual and exposition of the Law to an irritating degree, Karaism and Rabbinism never ceased to be one in their historical outlook on basic issues of national ideology. This applies to their attitude toward other religions, their eschatological expectations, their reaction to treatment by governments, and their relations with the native population of the lands wherein they dwelt.²⁶ In fact, the crux of Karaite-Rabbanite controversy lay precisely in this feeling of national solidarity.²⁷ The

לומברדיא עד נהר דורנו עד ארץ ספרד בקצה המערב כולם המקום ישיב שבותם ויקבץ גליתיהם שהם על דעת חכמי המשנה והתלמוד הוין ממדינה אתם במערב במדבר ורגלאן ומעט במצרים ומעט מהם היו בארץ הצבי.
For discussion of place-names see Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 77 f.

²⁵ This basic principle, governing the political history of the Karaites within the framework of general Jewish history, was laid down by P. F. Frankl, "Karaiten oder Karäer," *Ersch und Gruber Encz.*, Section Two, XXXIII (1883), 11b: "Nach Abstammung und hauptsächlichem Bekenntnis sind die Karäer Juden, haben stets als solche sich gefühlt und sind auch von ihren andersgläubigen Umgebungen jederzeit dafür angesehen worden, so das ihre Geschichte nur einen Theil der allgemeinen 'Geschichte der Juden' bildet. Die politische Geschichte des karäischen Sektenstammes ist nun dürftig an Momenten, welche geeignet waren dieselbe aus dem Rahmen der allgemeinen politischen Geschichte der Juden heraustreten zu lassen." Cf. also *ibid.*, 22b, and J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, vii (Preface).

²⁶ Cf. the twelfth-century Byzantine presentation of Karaite philosophy of history, *Hillūk haḳ-Ḳara'im we-ha-Rabbanim*, in Pinsker's *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. XII, 106: ורוב אלה: אמרו כי אע"פ שהרבנים ברוב המצות שוגים אחינו ובני דתינו הם ותענם נפשנו על שגגתם, על כי יוצרנו אמר בעד כל לישראל... מפני כי יש תקוה לצאת מהם זרע אמת... וראה כי אע"פ שיצא הבבוד מתוך ישראל לא הלך אל עם אחר.

The same text was invoked by the sixteenth-century Karaite Joseph Beghi in Turkey in support of his plea for fairness in the attitude of Karaite masters to their Rabbanite employees. Cf. his *Iggereth Kiryah Ne'emanah*, Leiden MS Warner No. 30 (a microfilm copy of which is in my possession), 200a, lines 7-6 from bottom. Mann who excerpted Beghi's important epistle failed to notice the indebtedness of the author to the twelfth-century *Hillūk* or, perhaps, to an earlier source from which both the author of the *Hillūk* and Joseph Beghi have quoted "the sages." Cf. *Texts and Studies*, II, 308, top, where the passage is reproduced in a faulty manner. By reading שוגים שואתם and שואתם for the original שגגתם, Mann inadvertently introduced into the text an idea which was far from the minds of the early Karaite sages and of their later disciples as well.

²⁷ Cf., for instance, the explanation of the motives of Karaite intra-Jewish missionary activity, as given by the tenth-century Sahl ben Maṣliḥ, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. III, 31 f.:

uniformly to both groups. Whether they lived in the political climate of Muslim Egypt or under the domination of Christian princes in Poland and Lithuania, the Karaites were included, for the purpose of law, under the general appellation of "Jews."³⁰ Similarly, no distinction was made between the two brands of Jewry by the rank and file of the Gentile population—for better or worse. This explains why none of the non-Jewish historians or chroniclers of the Middle Ages made any specific reference to *facts and events* in the life story of the Karaite community that might have aided us in our quest for data pertaining to Karaite expansion into Byzantium. Indeed, several medieval Arab historians and polemicists, in the course of their comparative research into the history of religious doctrines and creeds, were eager to note some of the salient points of Karaite argumentation against normative Judaism.³¹ But they were

Goitein, "Petitions to Fāṭimid Caliphs from the Cairo Genizah," *JQR* (N.S.), XLV (1956), 30 ff., and "A Caliph's Decree in Favour of the Rabbanite Jews in Palestine," *JJS*, V (1954), 118 ff. For the governmental intervention in a calendar feud between the Karaites and Rabbanites of Constantinople, see my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 33-37, as well as in Chapter VII of the present study.

³⁰ Thus, within the official jurisdiction of the Egyptian *Raīs al-Yahūd*, i.e., the *Nagid*, were all the sections of local Jewry, including not only the Karaites but the Samaritans as well. Cf. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 255; S. W. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, I, 191; E. Strauss [Ashtor], *Toledoth hay-Yehūdīm be-Miṣrayim we-Sūryah*, I-II, passim.

In Lithuania, the general appellation *judēi Trocenses*, invoked with regard to the Karaites of Troki in the charter granted to them by Casimir Jagiellon in 1441 without specifying at all their sectarian persuasion, is especially illuminating. In this document the local sectaries were given the exclusive privilege of forming an independent municipality under the Magdeburg Statute, headed by their own *Shōfeṭ*. Ironically, while the charter safeguarded the rights of the Troki Karaites against the encroachments of the Rabbanites from the neighboring city of Vilna, the latter used to borrow the Karaite charters whenever an intervention with the government seemed advisable. Surely, there would be no point in claiming privileges for the Rabbanite *judēi* on the basis of charters granted originally to *judēi* of the Karaite sect, were there any legal distinction between the two groups. Cf. the abundant material assembled and commented upon by Mann, in Section III of his indispensable thesaurus of *Karaitica*, *Texts and Studies*, II (esp. 609, note 55).

Even more revealing is the pronouncement of the Polish judge of the citadel of Lwów in 1501 that "*ex interrogatione seniorum Iudaeorum rescivimus quod in uno jure sunt cum ipsis Karaimowie.*" Cf. M. Balaban, "On the History of Karaites in Poland" (Hebrew), *Hattekūfah*, XVI (1923), 302 f. In the same vein, the privilege issued in 1578 to the Karaites of Halicz defined the recipients' rights and duties as being "*more aliorum Iudaeorum*" (*ibid.*, 305). Needless to recall, the Karaites paid their taxes through the general Jewish *Va'ad*. Cf. S. Dubnow, *Pinḳas ham-Medīnah*, 162, 203, etc. See also I. Halpern's *Pinḳas Va'ad Arba' ha-Arašoth*, 440, for the basic attitude of the Polish Crown stressing the equality of Karaites and Rabbanites with regard to the rate of capitation tax.

³¹ Arab historians who reported on 'Anan and Karaism were, e.g., al-Bīrūnī (ed.

intrigued mostly by the *theological aspects* of this intra-Jewish controversy.³² They showed little interest in reporting the daily life of their

Sachau), 58 f., Eng. tr., 68 f.; ash-Shahrastānī (ed. Cureton), I, 167, German tr. by Haarbrücker, I, 253 f.; al-Maḳrīzī, in De Sacy's *Chrestomathie Arabe* (2nd ed.), I, 91, 100 f., 108 (cf. the French tr. *ad loc.*). Cf. also the quotations and discussions in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē*, 4 ff.; A. Harkavy, *Ocherki*, I (offprint from *Voskhod*, 1897), 24 ff.; S. Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 165 f. These accounts are, however, more or less inaccurate adaptations from Karaite sources and do not offer material of primary value. Cf. Poznański, in *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 622a, note 3; L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 6, note 19.

With the growing list of new editions of medieval Muslim works, esp. those dealing with anti-Jewish polemics, the time has come, so it seems, for a fresh survey of data on Karaites that are included in them. Cf., for instance, R. Brunschvig, "L'Argumentation d'un théologien musulman du X siècle contre le Judaïsme" (on al-Bāḳillānī), in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa*, I (1950), 225 ff.; M. Perlmann, "Ibn Qayyim and the Devil," in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, II (1956), 336. On Ibn Ḥazm see the references in notes 32 and 33, below.

Cf. also, most recently, E. Mainz, "Comments on the Messiah in Karaite literature," *PAAJR*, XXV (1956), 116 f., where the distinction is correctly made between three parts of the passage in ash-Shahrastānī. Mainz's arguments in support of the belief in Messiah among the Karaites (*op. cit.*, 117 f.) are otherwise entirely superfluous. I have discussed the Shahrastānī passage in my paper on "Some Aspects of Karaite Attitude to Christians and Christianity," delivered at the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 1957).

³² It had been accepted almost as a truism that Karaite argumentation was taken over by Muslim theologians for the purpose of anti-talmudic polemic. See, in regard to Ibn Ḥazm, I. Goldziher, "Proben muḥammedanischer Polemik gegen den Talmud," *Jeschurun* (ed. Kobak), VIII (1872-73), 76 ff.; *idem*, "Über muḥammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-Kitāb," *ZDMG*, XXXII (1878), 341 ff. (esp. 363 ff.); M. Schreiner, "Miscellen (2): Aus Ibn Hazm's Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal," *MGWJ*, XXXIV (1885), 139 ff.; *idem*, "Zur Geschichte der Polemik zwischen Juden und Muḥammedanern," *ZDMG*, XLII (1888), 591 ff. (esp. 612 ff.). Cf. also M. Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, 99, 22, 138, 411; and H. Hirschfeld, "Mohammedan Criticism of the Bible," *JQR* (O.S.), XIII (1900-1901), 222 ff. Poznański, in "Ibn Ḥazm über jüdische Secten," *JQR* (O.S.), XVI (1903-4), 765 ff., sums up the results of these studies as follows: "It is sure that Ibn Ḥazm used Karaite sources and it is from there, no doubt, that he has taken the Aggadoth which he attacked." This statement is made in spite of Poznański's frank admission of the fact that in the pertinent passage dealt with in his essay "no special slant towards Karaism or altogether toward any of the enumerated five Jewish sects can be discerned" (*op. cit.*, 771, end).

Recently, M. Perlmann's fresh approach to the background of Muslim anti-Jewish polemics made us look for quarters other than Karaite—possibly Christian—which might have supplied the Muslim polemicists with the necessary source material. Cf. his remarks in *Journal of Jewish Bibliography*, III (1942), 71 ff.; his analysis of "Eleventh-century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada," *PAAJR*, XVIII (1948-49), 296 ff.; and his further studies on Ibn Ḥazm, in *JQR* (N.S.), XL (1950), 279 ff.

The doubts expressed by Perlmann in regard to the alleged Karaite inspiration of Muslim anti-Jewish arguments parallel my own misgivings, developed independently and along an entirely different line of evidence, concerning Y. F. Baer's well-known

Karaite contemporaries or historical events that might have affected their Karaite neighbors in a special way.³³

This mutual recognition, by Jew and Gentile, of a general Jewish political identity, embracing Karaites and Rabbanites alike and transcending ritual divergences and sectarian allegiance, prevailed throughout the ages. It was only in the relatively recent past that political expediency on the part of both government and Karaite leadership scored a victory over the traditional fraternity of fate which the sectarian minority shared with the Rabbanite majority of the Jewish people for over one thousand years. Inevitably, the different treatment accorded to Karaites by the Czarist regime of Russia, as contrasted with the hapless status of Rabbanite Jewry in the so-called Pale of Settlement, and the conscious effort on the part of nineteenth-century Karaite leadership to demonstrate ethnical and historical independence of the Karaites from the main body of the Jewish people, have cast a grim shadow on the relations between Rabbanites and Karaites in Eastern Europe.³⁴ The cultivation of the sect's juridical and cultural separateness by the government of Poland and by Polish Karaite spokesmen in the post-World War I era made the gulf between the two camps in Jewry ever deeper. Thus, Time belatedly substantiated the angry rebuttal hurled at the Karaites by a

and also generally accepted thesis on the alleged direct borrowing of Karaite arguments against the Talmud and the Midrashim by medieval Christian polemicists. Cf. Baer's "Abner aus Burgos," *Korespondenzblatt der Akad. für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, X (1929), 20 ff.; *idem*, *Toledoth hay-Yehüdīm bi-Sefarad han-Noşerith*, I, 228 f.; and, recently, J. Rosenthal's "The Talmud on Trial," *JQR*. (N. S.), XLVII (1956), 64 ff., 69. A reappraisal of the mutual Karaite-Christian influences will, however, have to be deferred to a later occasion.

From an entirely different angle, R. Mahler draws an analogy between Karaism and the medieval Christian heresies. Cf. the last chapter of his *Hak-Kara'im*. Mahler calls attention there to parallel processes, springing out of parallel historical circumstances and drives, but quite correctly refrains from suggesting any direct Christian borrowing or textual leaning on Karaite literature.

³³ It has to be noted, however, that Ibn Hazm's inadvertent reference to his Karaite contemporaries in Toledo and Talavera is our earliest explicit mention of the existence of the sectaries in Spain. Cf. his account in the Cairo edition (A.H. 1317) of *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi Milāl wa-l-Ahwā' wa-n-Niḥāl*, I, 99. This paragraph was published earlier, in Hebrew characters, by Schreiner, in his already-cited article in *MGWJ*, XXXIV (1885), 139 f. The corrupt transcription of both editions was partially corrected by Poznański, in *JQR* (O.S.), XVI (1903-4), 767, and, ultimately, by Perlmann's happy restoration of the diacritical marks, in *PAAJR*, XVIII (1948-49), 280, note 44.

³⁴ Cf. the brief summary of facts by A. Harkavy, *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 444 ff., and by J. Mann, in his *Texts and Studies*, II, vii ff., 695 ff., and 1405 ff. Cf. also below, Chapter II, esp. 59.

Babylonian gaon a full millennium earlier: "And they have become a nation unto themselves."³⁵

Not before 1950 was the conscious act performed by both Karaites and Rabbanites of returning to the original fraternity of fate of all Jewry. With the inclusion of the dissenters, by an Executive Directive, among those eligible for Ingathering-of-Exiles under the Law of Repatriation of the State of Israel, and with the establishment of new settlements by Karaite immigrants near the city of Ramlah and in the Northern Negeb, foundations were laid for a new chapter in Karaite-Rabbanite relations.³⁶ Nevertheless, legalistic and ritual carry-overs from olden days, especially in the field of marriage law, continue to perpetuate even in Israel the twelve-centuries-old rift.

COMMUNAL INTERACTION

We have seen that the political history of the Karaites in its broader sense—i.e., their interaction with the Gentile world—was synonymous with the political history of the main body of the Jewish people. This naturally brings into sharper focus a "political" history of a different kind, namely, the unique pattern of mutual relationships between the sect and the Mother Synagogue. For, besides the never-ending *academic* debates and bickerings over minutiae of legal interpretation and exegesis, one encounters, on the surface at least, two constant expressions of an irrevocable *social* rift. On the Karaite side, there was the self-determined *secession* from the religious and institutional bonds of geonic and exilarchic authority (or of the regional successors thereof) in the Islamic world.³⁷ The Rabbanites, on the other hand, annually reiterated an *ex-communication act* on the Mount of Olives in Palestine, and solemnly proclaimed Karaism to be a heresy menacing the whole fold.³⁸

³⁵ Naṭronai Gaon, in *Siddūr R. 'Amram Ga'ōn* (ed. Warsaw), 38: ונעשו אומה לעצמן.

³⁶ Cf. the data on the present-day Karaite community of Israel briefly summarized by I. Ben-Zvi, *Ereṣ Yisrael we-Yishshūbah bi-Ymē hash-Shilṭōn ha-'Otomāni*, 433.

³⁷ Significantly, the tenth-century Karaite polemicist and exegete, Salman ben Yerūham, uses the verb *kharaja* (خَرَجَ) when stressing Karaite rebellion against Rabbanite institutionalism: וילדך כאן אהל אלכתאב בני מקרא ישיצ' כרגו ען ריאסה בני בירב: This term plainly denotes secession from a religious or political body. Cf. the full statement of Salman in *Likḳūṭē*, App. II, 51 f., note 2, and in Mann's *Texts and Studies*, II, 84.

³⁸ Cf. the report by Ibn Daūd in *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 79: וכשהיו ישראל חוגגים את חג הסוכות בהר החמים היו חוגגים בהר מחנות מחנות אהבים אלו את אלו ומברכין אלו את אלו. והמנינים (נ"א: והצדוקים=הקראים) חוגגים נגדם כשני חשיפי עוים. והיו הרבנים מוציאים ספר תורה ומחרימין שמת המניין בפניהם והם שותקים כמו כלבים אלמים לא יוכלו לנבוח. That this was an ancient custom is obvious from the excitement that arose in the eleventh century when the Palestinian gaon, Solomon ben Yehūdah, failed to pronounce the

This is, however, only the formal part of the story. The neat picture painted by nineteenth-century scholarship, in which two opposing camps were shown facing each other along a straight Sectarian Divide in an all-out bid for supremacy in Judaism, could not be maintained in the light of new discoveries. The Cairo Genizah revealed to us scores of testimonies to the contrary from the tenth and the eleventh centuries, the period of Karaism's greatest creativity. These testimonies confront us with a complex of tensions and releases, conflicts and adjustments, pressures and counterpressures, which cannot be forced into a black-and-white diagram. The documents from Palestine, Egypt and Babylonia, edited and interpreted in the last five decades, clearly show how communal struggles and agreements tended to cut across party lines, creating strange combinations of foe and friend.

True, the full import of the interests and ambitions, calculations and emotions, involved in many of these alignments is often lost to us for lack of sufficient background information. Still, it is a matter of record that no less an opponent of the sect than Saadyah Gaon did not hesitate to fight the claims of the Palestinian geonim of the Ben Meir family and of the Babylonian exilarch David ben Zakkāi, notwithstanding the fact that the Karaites were also embattled against them.³⁹ On the other hand, a century and a half later, Daniel ben 'Azaryah became gaon and patriarch of Palestine with considerable help from the sectarians.⁴⁰ Indeed, his son David even married the daughter of a Karaite potentate of Fuṣṭāṭ.⁴¹

To what extent the Karaites were a force to be reckoned with in intra-Rabbanite feuds we learn from a heated conflict with regard to the Palestinian Gaonate which burst into the open in the late 30's of the eleventh century.⁴² The usurper, Nathan ben Abraham, and the

ban (note the expressions אל חשנה מנהגי and אל חשנה מנהגי הראשונים in the Genizah document published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 315, lines 5 and 11, respectively). The gaon's action followed an official interdiction of this practice by the Fāṭimid government in 1024, which was issued no doubt under the pressure of the powerful Karaite notables in Fuṣṭāṭ. For the whole story see Mann's ultimate reconstruction, *Texts and Studies*, II, 62 ff.

³⁹ J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 46, 132, 134. Cf. also S. W. Baron, "Saadiyah's Communal Activities," *Saadiyah Anniversary Volume of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (1943), 9.

⁴⁰ Cf. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimids*, I, 178, 274.

⁴¹ The marriage contract was published by S. Schechter in *JQR* (O.S.), XIII (1900-1901), 220-21, and reproduced in Gulak's *Oṣar hash-Sheṭaroth*, 33 f., §29. Cf. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 138, 177, 188. See below, Chapter VII, note 17.

⁴² See Mann's "The Affair of Nathan ben Abraham as Rival Gaon in Palestine to

legitimate gaon, Solomon ben Yehūdah, both did their utmost to win the support (or, at least, the neutrality) of the Karaite community. When finally the matter was brought to a close in 1041, the Karaite Nasī Ḥizkiyah (ben Solomon ben David) was among the signatories to the agreement concluded between the rival Rabbanite parties.⁴³ In turn, the Palestinian Karaites, who were plunged into the thick of this basically non-Karaite battle, were themselves divided as to which of the Rabbanite sides deserved their support.⁴⁴

In brief: Contrary to once-prevailing notions, communal feuds and alliances of the tenth and the eleventh centuries failed more often than not to group themselves automatically along sectarian lines. Since it is in that time that the rise of Byzantine Karaism may plausibly be placed, this fact is an indispensable premise on which to build our future conjectures over the course of early Karaism in Byzantium.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF TOBIAS BEN MOSES

Indeed, the scanty Genizah materials which pertain to early Karaites of Byzantine origin (alas, a total of only three documents!) substantiate the present general observations. One is a letter written from Jerusalem by a Byzantine Karaite "Mourner of Zion," who was to attain later the leadership of his native community.⁴⁵ The letter demonstrates that already in its formative years Byzantine Karaism displayed the same traits of "political" history (in the limited sense defined above) which characterized the daily communal relations between Karaites and Rabbanites in Palestine and Egypt.

The writer, Tobias ben Moses, was a Byzantine student, a keen apprentice of Palestinian Karaite masters in the field of anti-Rabbanite polemics

Solomon ben Yehūdah," in *Texts and Studies*, I, 323 ff., where his earlier comments on the subject are also cited.

⁴³ Cf. R. Gottheil and W. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, 200, and the corrections by S. Assaf, *Zion* (O.S.), II (1927-28), 116, and by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 332 (cf. also Assaf, *Tarbiz*, III [1931], 345 f.). The corrected Arabic text was reproduced, along with a Hebrew translation, in *Sefer hay-Yishshüb* (ed. S. Assaf and L. A. Mayer), II, 27a-28b, §56.

⁴⁴ This has been proposed in my reinterpretation of "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses the Karaite of Constantinople" against the background of the Nathan ben Abraham affair. Cf. J. L. Blau and others (ed.), *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 18 ff.

⁴⁵ The letter of Tobias ben Moses was first published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 383-85, and interpreted there, 372 f., then reedited on the basis of a photostatic copy of the Cambridge MS in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 31-34. See above, 27, note 3.

and an accomplished fighter against Rabbinism in the academic domain.⁴⁶ Yet, addressing himself to a Rabbanite scholar and politician in Fustāṭ at the peak of the Nathan ben Abraham affair,⁴⁷ he did not find it odd to complain about the highhanded whip-tactics of his own (Karaites) Patriarchate. He further declared continued loyalty to his Rabbanite correspondent, who was a staunch supporter of Nathan ben Abraham. This was in direct opposition to the official policy of the Karaite Patriarchate. Finally, disgusted with the authoritarian handling of funds by the administration of the Karaite Nasī, he resolved to leave Palestine for good. From that time on he devoted his talents and energies to his native community on the Bosphorus.

We cannot pause to analyze the events that formed the background of this particular letter, since they occurred outside the realm of the Byzantine Empire and involved primarily non-Byzantine interests.⁴⁸ But the general pattern of Karaite-Rabbanite relations which was manifested through them left a deep impression on this first great leader of the Karaites in Byzantium and had a lasting effect on the subsequent history of Byzantine Karaism.

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AND SIMILARITY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The political identification of the Karaites with the majority of the Jewish people, of which both Karaites and Rabbanites as well as their non-Jewish neighbors were conscious, was underscored not only by alignments and alliances which crossed party lines whenever vested interests were involved. Such identification was ultimately supported also by the sameness of economic pursuits and the similarity of social structure during the period under consideration.

In a recent presentation of Karaite history the schism was interpreted as an expression of a class protest, necessarily religious in form but reflecting the interests of the lower social and economic strata of the population.⁴⁹ Yet, even this controversial thesis conceded that the alleged

⁴⁶ Some of the anti-Saadyan polemics of Tobias ben Moses in his hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad* were summarized by S. Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah Gaon*, 61 ff. Cf. above, 29, note 8, for the list of printed excerpts. Short new passages will be reproduced later in this volume from a microfilm copy of the Bodleian MS at my disposal. Cf., e.g., below, Chapter VI, notes 28 and 105.

⁴⁷ The letter was addressed to Peraḥ (=Perahyah) ben Mūmal (or Muammil).

⁴⁸ For the full story and documentation see my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses."

⁴⁹ R. Mahler, *Karaimer—a Yiddishe Geuleh-bewegung in Mitlalter*. In the present

differentiation disappears entirely, if indeed it ever existed, in the Egyptian and Byzantine extensions of Karaism.⁵⁰ In fact, several allusions in the available texts indicate that the Karaite community at the turn of the millennium was subject to the same social and economic conflicts which raged in the Rabbanite society, though surely on a proportionately smaller scale. It is true, of course, that at an earlier age Jews living in the remote, underprivileged peripheries of the Caliphate could hardly share in the intellectual and economic flowering of the main urban centers in which the great Rabbanite institutions were located. The formation of sects marked their active protest against Rabbanite aristocracy, whether of blood, wealth or learning.⁵¹ Such motivations, however, cannot be ascribed to Karaism in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In this period the Karaites themselves had already produced a native aristocracy and a bourgeoisie of their own, both of which inevitably developed a taste for wealth and political station.⁵² The "ideal of poverty" of the tenth-century Karaite "Mourners of Zion," next to love of the Holy Land, was undeniably the most beautiful note struck by the sectarian literature in Palestine and had a predominant sway over the thinking and feelings of Byzantine Karaite pietists. However, that ideal seems to have been hardly representative of the general outlook and social composition of the Karaite community, even if wealthy members of the congregation may have looked up to it as worthy of respect and financial support.⁵³

study reference is made all along to the Hebrew version of the book, *Haḳ-Ḳara'im—Tenū'ath Ge'ūlah Yehūdiḥ bi-Ymē hab-Beynayyim*.

⁵⁰ *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, Chapter X, 303 ff.

⁵¹ See *Introd.*, above, 5, 10, 12.

⁵² The high position and conspicuous wealth of some of the Karaite notables in Fustāt had been noted ever since the publication of Genizah documents dealing with Egyptian and Palestinian affairs in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. Cf. the statement of the eleventh-century Palestinian gaon, Solomon ben Yehūdāh, in Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 141, note 1: הם בטחו בשריהם ובסופריהם ועשיריהם: והקרובים אל המלכות.

⁵³ Cf. the idealistic presentation of the "Mourners of Zion" by the twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite author of *Hillūḳ haḳ-Ḳara'im we-ha-Rabbanim*, in *Liḳḳūṣē*, App. XII, 104: והניחו בתיהם שדותיהם וקרמיהם לחרבה ועלו מבבל לירושלים... והשקים דבוקים על בשרם. Cf. also for the same century Hadassī, *Eshkol haḳ-Kofer*, 10b, second introductory Alphabet: שגאו בתי מדות, שדה ושדות. שמחו למכרם ולקנות מקום מועט מארץ הצבי בה להתרודת.

The actual leaders of the "Mourners of Zion" in tenth-century Jerusalem use a similar wording. Cf., for instance, Salman ben Yerūham, as quoted below, 54, note 72. See also Sahl ben Maṣliāh, in *Liḳḳūṣē*, App. III, 31 (*Karaite Anthology*, 114, §6): עזבו מסחרתם... נטשו ארמונים ושכנו קנים... ששטו בגדים נאים ולבשו שקים.

Incidentally, all the above texts clearly imply ownership of real estate and consi-

As with the above-stressed unity of political history, so also the Karaite position and function in the economic life of the period will have to be viewed in a context common to Jewry as a whole. That is, we must regard the Karaites as subject to the same economic limitations and opportunities that the same environment offered to the entire Jewish camp. The assumption of common economic experience and similar economic endeavor thus forms the third guiding premise on which our search for Byzantine Karaite beginnings will have to be based. This premise, along with the two discussed earlier—fraternity of political destiny and close communal interaction—is already manifest in the earliest explicit reference to Byzantine Karaites yielded by any of the sources at our disposal.

To the document containing this reference we shall now turn our attention.

LIGHT FROM THE CAIRO GENIZAH

We mentioned earlier that there are three Genizah documents which, though not of Byzantine origin, shed some light on the early Karaite inhabitants of the Empire. One of these is a Rabbanite letter, dated December, 1028 C.E.,⁵⁴ which forms part of a series of exchanges between the Jewish community of Alexandria and Ephraim ben Shemaryah, the well-known leader of the congregation of Jerusalemites in Fustāt.⁵⁵

In an upsurge of piracy by Muslims against Byzantine shipping in the East Mediterranean basin in the late 20's of the eleventh century, the burden of fulfilling the traditional obligation of ransoming Jewish prisoners weighed too heavily on the shoulders of the Alexandrian community; hence, an appeal for financial support of the wealthy Fustāt congregations seemed imperative. The plea of December, 1028, mentions a fresh batch of captives just brought by the Arab pirates into the harbor. The group consisted of three Karaites and four Rabbanites,

derable wealth on the part of the Karaite settlers before their having joined the "Mourners" and renounced their former way of life. On the theological implications of the "ideal of poverty" see Wieder, "The Qumrān Sectaries and the Karaites," *JQR* (N.S.), XLVII (1956-57), 283 ff.

⁵⁴ A. Cowley, "Bodleian Genizah Fragments—IV," *JQR* (O.S.), XIX (1906-7), 250-54; J. Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 190 f., No. 132. For discussion of content and background see Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 87 ff. (esp. 89); *idem*, *Texts and Studies*, II, 287; Starr, *op. cit.*, 32, 242 (App. A); and the references given in the next note.

⁵⁵ See, in addition to the sources mentioned in the first part of the preceding note, the texts published by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 87 ff., and Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 186 f. and 190 f. (Nos. 128, 129, 133).

merchants from the Byzantine city of Attaleia on the southern coast of Asia Minor.⁵⁶

This important Genizah find contains certain characteristics which, within the context of the entire correspondence on the subject, allow several definitive conclusions to be drawn. In the first place, while sympathetic to the plight of their Byzantine coreligionists in the face of the spasmodic eruptions of piracy in the neighboring waters, the spokesmen of the Egyptian Jewish community seem to accept the direct sea-traffic between Attaleia and Egypt, carrying Jewish merchants on commercial enterprises, as a matter of course. Moreover, the frequency of the raids on the very same route in a short span of time, as illustrated by the documentary material at hand, proves that a lively Jewish commerce was already moving there for a considerable time. This international trade was evidently taken for granted and needed no comment; indeed, were it not for the *extraordinary* needs which prompted the initiation of a correspondence on the subject, we might have been deprived altogether of the knowledge that such a trade ever existed.

Likewise, the participation of Karaites from Attaleia in such commercial ventures, shoulder to shoulder with Rabbanite fellow merchants, seems to have caused no astonishment among the Jewish residents of Alexandria. In fact, the Alexandrian correspondents are obviously familiar with the identity of the Byzantine Karaite captives and with their social standing in the community as elders and taxpaying heads of families, similar to their Rabbanite compatriots.⁵⁷ The specific mention of their sectarian affiliation stems not from the novelty of the appearance of Karaites from Byzantium on the Egyptian coast; rather, it was a well-advised move by the impoverished Alexandrian community to

⁵⁶ Cowley, *JQR* (O.S.), XIX (1906-7), 252, esp. lines 30-37: באה אלינו שמועה כי באו שבוים אחרים לא האמנו עד אשר באו עבדי אחד מהערביים ששמו יבקי בן אבי רזי ועמם שבעה יהודים סחרים מבני ארץ אנטאליה הביא אותם יבקי אל מושב זקנו ואדירנו מר רב נתנאל תבהן ג"י בן ר' אליעזר ג"ע. כראותנו אותם אז עצמה תוגתנו ורבה אנהתנו ובכינו לקשה יום ועגמה נפשנו ואמרנו אינו לנו מה גרמו עונותינו לנו שנפורנו בארבע קצות הארץ וגרמו חטאתינו שנשבה ממקום למקום. אמר לנו הערבי אני אבקש מכם דמי אילו השבעה שמהם ארבעה רבנין ושלושה קראין. . . אמר אליו תוקן נתנאל תבהן יחי לעד לא השאתם באילו העניים מהיה אפילו לעמוד במונותם קל וחומר שיעמדו לך בדמים

The identity of Antaliyah—meaning Attaleia—was already established by Cowley (*op. cit.*, 250), but then ignored by Mann (*Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 89), who read "Anatolia," and reclaimed by Starr, "The Place-Name İtalyah-Antaliyah," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, XVII (1937-38), 475 ff., and *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 186, No. 128n. Additional notices on the existence of a Jewish community in Attaleia are listed in Starr's article in the *Rivista*, 476. Cf. also A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 296 ff.; *Appendice* to that work, 31 ff.; and *Les Juifs sous la domination des Turcs seldjoukides*, 9. Galanté seems to be unaware of the Genizah material cited here.

⁵⁷ Cowley, *op. cit.*, 253, lines 55-56: גם אילו השבעה האנשים השבוים מבני אנטאליה ומוקניה ומבעלי בתים שבה

enlist the sympathy of all segments of Egyptian Jewry for this major fund-raising campaign. Surely, a separate reference to Karaite captives would assure the favorable participation of the wealthy Karaite notables of Fustāṭ and of their coreligionists in other communities, such as Tinnis, Damietta and Ṣahragt.⁵⁸

Thus, the importance of this Rabbanite document extends beyond the incidental information about the existence of a sectarian community in the Asian coastal province of the Byzantine Empire. It also brings into focus with admirable simplicity all the three basic phenomena of Karaite history that were listed in our previous discussion: the identical economic pursuits of the Karaites and Rabbanites, their common exposure to the same external adversities, and the consciousness of collective obligation on the part of both branches of Jewry to care for the welfare of Karaites and Rabbanites alike in time of distress. Obviously, the pirates did not discriminate between the two nor did they favor any. The standard *per capita* ransom (33¹/₃ dinars) was collected for each prisoner, whether orthodox Jew or sectarian.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 253, lines 41–48: ... לאחר כן נתקבצנו עם אדירנו הזקן הנכבד מר רב נתנאל יחי לער... ואמרנו מה נעשה בוו הנזרה שגור עלינו הקב"ה מרוב החטאות והעונות שאנחנו בלולים בהם. אמר אלינו... שלחו מכתבים שנים אל שני החברים ואל קהלות הרבנים שבשתי הכניסיות [=הבבליין והירושלמיין] גם מכתב אחד אל קהל הקראים גם אני אכילה עמהם מכתבים אל כל הזקנים שיעמדו בנה הרבר וירחיבו לב ויפחחו יר גם ישלחו מכתבים אל תנים ורמיאט וצחירגת מהקראים והרבנים להתנדב ולפרות אילו גם יוסיפו עור עליהם והובים אחרים לשלחם באורדתם וכסותם וצרכיהם... אולי יסייע הקב"ה הליכתם אל ארצם גם הם לחיים ולשלום.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 252, lines 34–35, and 253, lines 43 f.: אמר לנו הערכי אני אבקש מכם דמי אילו השבעה: ... מהם ארבעה רבנין ושלשה קראין שרמייהם מאתים ושלשה ושלשים זהובים ושלש זהוב... אמר אלינו Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 87, called attention to the fact that this price corresponds to the sum quoted by Muḳaddasī (as communicated by G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Muslims*, 23 f.).

Indeed, in the interesting account by Muḳaddasī of the ransom of *Muslim* prisoners from the hands of the Greeks we read: "All along the sea-coast of the Province of Syria are the watch-stations, where the levies assemble. The warships and the galleys of the Greeks also come into these ports, bringing aboard of them the captives taken from the Muslims; these they offer for ransom—three for the hundred dinars." Cf. Muḳaddasī's *Description of Syria including Palestine*, Eng. tr. by Le Strange, in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, III, 61 f. Cf. also G. Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 567 f., note 4. Thus, the sum of 33¹/₃ dinars was probably an internationally accepted price for slaves and prisoners, whether captured by Muslims or by the Byzantines.

Significantly, there was no change in price for more than forty years (Muḳaddasī wrote his account about 985 C.E.). Nevertheless, it seems that in special cases the price was higher. From the report by Yaḥya of Antioch we gather that, some twenty years before Muḳaddasī, Sayf ad-Daula paid 240,000 dinars in ransom for 3,000 Muslim captives. That would amount to 80 dinars *per capita*. Cf. J. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de Yaḥya-ibn-Sa'īd d'Antioche* (Arabic text and French tr.), in *Patrologia Orientalis*, XVIII, No. 5, 803 f. [105 f.]. At an unspecified later period

Moreover, this first *documentary* reference to Karaites of Byzantine origin precedes any date that could have confidently been assigned to Karaite settlement in Byzantium on the basis of estimates from the available *literary* material alone. Indeed, it assumes the existence of Karaism in Attaleia in so casual a manner that the sectarian community there appears to have been in 1028 a well-established reality. Hence, the *beginnings* of Karaite settlement on the coast of Asia Minor and, possibly, in the Empire at large, must be placed in a considerably earlier period.

ON THE BOSPORUS

The advantages of the Byzantine coastline and of the island of Cyprus quite naturally drew a number of Jewish settlers of both denominations. This will be developed at greater length in a later chapter. Still, none of these places could possibly match the attraction of Constantinople. Very early, then, a Karaite community must have arisen also on the shores of the Bosphorus, alongside the ancient Rabbanite settlement.

Some indirect indications to this effect can be gleaned from the Genizah correspondence of Tobias ben Moses which was cited above. It follows from the revised chronology, suggested in my new edition of that correspondence, that the hitherto accepted dating of Tobias' activity is rather late.⁶⁰ This late dating was due to the mistaken notion that Tobias was a pupil of the great Palestinian master Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah. Since the latter's commentaries were created about 1050 C.E. and later, the student years of Tobias under the supposed tutelage of Yeshū'ah were also assigned to the middle or the second half of the eleventh century.⁶¹

An investigation of Tobias' Hebrew translations from the Arabic and a scrutiny of the late traditions connected with Tobias convinced me

(the Crusades?) 200 Jewish captives in Byzantium were ransomed for 5000 dinars (= 25 dinars *per capita*). Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 348 f., and 354 ff., esp. lines 39-40. See further Andréadès, in *Byzantium* (ed. Baynes-Moss), 52, note 1.

Cf. also the paragraph on the "Ransom of Captives," in S. W. Baron's *The Jewish Community*, II, 333 ff., and the abundant literature cited there, III, 213 f.

⁶⁰ See my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," *passim*.

⁶¹ Yeshū'ah's so-called Large Commentary on the Pentateuch was written about 1050 C.E., as follows from a MS described by D. S. Margoliouth, "The Arabic Writings of Abū'l-Faraj Furkan ibn Asad," *JQR* (O.S.), XI (1898-99), 210; cf. Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 50. An abridged version of the commentary was started in 1054. Cf. Margoliouth, "Ibn al-Hiti's Arabic Chronicle of Karaite Doctors," *JQR* (O.S.), IX (1896-97), 434 (Eng. tr., 440; also in Nemoj's *Karaite Anthology*, 233).

that Tobias ben Moses was not a pupil of Yeshū'ah but of Yeshū'ah's own teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr, the illustrious Karaite philosopher of the first half of the eleventh century. It is possible, too, that he studied for some time under Abū'l-Faraj Harūn, the famous "Jerusalem grammarian" and friend of al-Baṣīr, who also was a teacher of Yeshū'ah. Thus, Tobias and Yeshū'ah were more or less of the same age and perhaps classmates in the Karaite Academy of Jerusalem.⁶²

In brief: Tobias' departure from Constantinople on a study trip to Jerusalem and the events in which the Attaleia Karaites were involved must have taken place roughly at the same time. Now, Tobias' studies and scholarly accomplishments, embracing Karaite law, biblical exegesis, linguistic research and philosophy, were undoubtedly extensive and time-consuming. In the Holy City he acquired a thorough education. He also took an active part in local Palestinian affairs, came in contact with important personalities of the region,⁶³ and was even initiated into the Order of the "Mourners of Zion."⁶⁴ All this warrants the assumption that his stay in the sectarian center in Jerusalem was of more than average duration and that he possibly spent about a decade or so among the saintly "Mourners" and scholars. It is equally safe to suppose that Tobias was at least in his late teens on his arrival in Jerusalem. In 1041 C.E. we find him already resolved to pack up and return home. At that time he had obviously reached the age of thirty or more.⁶⁵

⁶² Cf. my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 28 ff., and "Elijah Bashyachi: An Inquiry into His Traditions Concerning the Beginnings of Karaism in Byzantium" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 44 ff.

For literature on these great luminaries of the eleventh century see below, Chapter II, notes 65 (al-Baṣīr) and 66 (Yeshū'ah), and Chapter IV, note 64 (Abū'l-Faraj Harūn).

⁶³ Tobias' correspondence with Peraḥ ben Mūmal of Fustāṭ was already referred to earlier. In his letter to Peraḥ Tobias mentions another respectable person (*Zaken*) in Fustāṭ, a mutual friend of both Tobias and Peraḥ. Also mentioned is Abū 'Alī Yefeth ben Abraham in Jerusalem. Tobias wrote dirges on the occasion of the death of Abū 'Alī's father. Abū 'Alī seems to have been a well-known benefactor of the "Mourners of Zion" in Jerusalem.

⁶⁴ In his letter to Peraḥ Tobias styles himself *Abel* (i.e., "Mourner"). So also in the fragment of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad*, communicated by A. Neubauer, *Bodleian Catalogue*, I, 57 f. (and Volume of Facsimiles, plate XXXV): "I, Tobias the Scribe, the 'Mourner,' one of the 'Mourners of Zion,' have written this book." See below, Chapter VI, note 23.

⁶⁵ The date 1041 is derived from the fact that Tobias' letter, in which his preparations for a speedy departure are announced, must have been written following the winter of 1040-41, yet before the agreement between Nathan ben Abraham and Solomon ben Yehūdāh was reached. This agreement was signed in the fall (*Hosha'nah Rabbah*) of 1041. Incidentally, this date falls in well with the thesis mentioned above, according to which Tobias was the pupil of Joseph al-Baṣīr. The year of al-Baṣīr's death, as concluded by Poznański on the basis of the Chronicle of Ibn al-Hītū, was 1040.

Consequently, the date of Tobias' birth in the Karaite community of Constantinople cannot be placed later than the end of the first decade of the eleventh century. This necessarily implies the existence of a sectarian settlement in Constantinople between the years 1000–1010, if not earlier.⁶⁶

EARLIEST COMMUNAL ORGANIZATION

A second letter shows us another important milestone in Tobias' career. Moreover, it allows us to draw an additional and far-reaching conclusion with respect to the chronology of Karaite institutions and communal

Cf. his "Nouveaux renseignements sur Abou-l Faradj Haroun," *REJ*, LVI (1908), 43 f.; *idem*, "The Beginning of Karaite Settlement in Jerusalem" (in Hebrew), *Jerusalem* (ed. Luncz), X (1913), 104, 106; and in *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 666a. Tobias' decision to leave Jerusalem, prompted by unpleasant developments in 1040–41 within the Karaite community of the city, was undoubtedly strengthened by the recent death of his master. The grief of the bereaved pupil is still sensed lingering between the lines of the letter.

The correctness of Poznański's conclusion as to the date of al-Baṣīr's death had been impugned some thirty years ago, following the discovery of a MS allegedly dictated by al-Baṣīr in 1048. Cf. A. Marx, "The Books and MSS of the Seminary Library in the Exhibition of the N.Y. Public Library," *United Synagogue Recorder*, VI (June, 1926), 20b (also in German translation, *Soncino-Blätter*, II [1927], 116). This finding was subsequently incorporated by S. Skoss into his edition of *The Arabic Commentary of 'Alī ben Suleimān the Karaite on the Book of Genesis*, 92 f., note to line 8, and 191, addendum to p. 19, as well as in Skoss' reply in *Tarbiz*, II (1930–31), 513, to D. Z. Baneth's discussion there of "The Date of 'Alī ben Suleimān," 115 ff. This allegation, however, has proved, on my closer examination of the MS, entirely unfounded. See my "Ibn al-Hitī and the Chronology of Joseph al-Baṣīr," *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1–2 (1957), 71–81.

⁶⁶ According to J. Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 198, Tobias was born a Rabbanite and suffered a great deal because of his conversion to the Karaite creed. The story was repeated by M. Seligsohn in the *Jewish Enc.*, XII, 166b. From the references given by Fürst it follows that this biographical detail was inferred from the fragment of a work entitled *Yehī Me'ōroth* which was briefly excerpted by Pinsker in *Likkūṭē*, App. IX, 94 ff., and Note VI, 150. In the latter *locus* the author of *Yehī Me'ōroth* states the following: וְאִשְׁרֵי הַמְּבִינִי אֲשֶׁר יֵשִׁיב אֵל לְבוֹ וַיִּמְחַר מֵהָ וַיִּשְׁלִיךְ מִמֶּנּוּ מֵאֲשֶׁר הוּא וְאִשְׁרֵי עֲלִיּוֹ, וְאֵל יִאֲמַר אִיךָ אֲשֶׁלִיךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּידֵי וְלֹא יִשְׁאָר לִי לֹא שָׂרְרָה וְלֹא כִבֹּר וְגַם אֲנִי פוֹחַד מֵאֲבִי וּמֵאֲמִי וּמִן בְּנֵי אָדָם הַרְשָׁעִים וְאִשְׁרֵי אָדָם מִפְּחַד תְּמִיד.

It is, however, obvious that the passage contains no biographical account whatsoever. It carries the usual Karaite exhortation concerning the personal responsibility of each individual to follow the Law rather than the unlawful practice of his parents. A somewhat similar line of argument we find in the epistle of Šahl ben Mašliah, *Likkūṭē*, App. III, 33 f. (Eng. tr. in Nemoj's *Karaite Anthology*, 118, §17): דַּעוֹ אַחֲזִינוּ: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּי כָל אֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ תְּלִי לְנַפְשׁוֹ... וְדַעוּ בִּי הַמְּצַטְרֵק וְאוֹמֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲבוֹתַי הַלְכְּתִי לֹא יוֹעִיל לִּי מֵאֲמָרָה, וְהֵלֵךְ אֲלֵהֶנּוּ יֵת אֲמַר אֵל תְּלִי בְּאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם... לְהוֹדִיעַ בִּי אֵינִי חַיִּב עֲלֵינוּ לִלְכַת אַחֲרֵי הָאֲבוֹת עַל כָּל פְּנִים כִּי אִם חֹב עֲלֵינוּ לְהַתְּבוֹן בְּדַרְכֵיהֶם... וְאֵם יִהְיוּ דְבוֹרֵיהֶם בְּחֻלְףֵי הַתְּרָה גְּשִׁלְךָ אֹתָם. The same sentiments also are expressed by Yefeth ben 'Alī, Šahl's older contemporary, in his Arabic Commentary on the Book of Zechariah. Cf. the quotation in Harkavy,

organization in Byzantium.⁶⁷ It seems that a few years after he had left Palestine for his native land, but prior to the year 1048, Tobias traveled again beyond the boundaries of Byzantine territory.⁶⁸

From a letter written by Tobias while he was on some mission in

Studien und Mittheilungen, VIII, 176, and Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 184. See also below, Chapter V, notes 17–20.

Moreover, Fürst's invocation of the text in connection with Tobias is in itself erroneous. Pinsker, against the better judgment of Abraham Firkowicz, insisted on attributing the authorship of *Yehi Me'ōroth* to Tobias ben Moses (see the views of Pinsker and Firkowicz in *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. IX, 93; P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXXI [1882], 77 f.; A. B. Gottlob, *Biḳḳoreth le-Tholedoth haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 168 f.; S. Buber, in his introduction to *Leḳḳaḥ Ṭob* on Genesis-Exodus, 47 [24a], §6, and note 32). Pinsker was followed, as in almost all other matters, by Fürst. It seems that also M. Steinschneider concurred with Pinsker. Cf. *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, 330, note 45.

Subsequent studies, however, have proved this assumption to be unfounded. In a rare agreement with Firkowicz, P. F. Frankl has shown that the text in question was preparatory to Hadassi's encyclopedic *Eshkol haḳ-Kofer* and that Hadassi's authorship of the tract is actually stated in the published fragment itself. Cf. Frankl in the already-cited article in *MGWJ* and in his Hebrew review-article on *Liḳḳūṭē Ḳadmoniyoth, Hashshaḳar*, VII (1876), 710-11. In his findings Frankl was followed by Poznański (*Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 71; *Oṣar Yisrael*, V, 13; "Une liste d'ouvrages caraites," *REJ*, LXXII [1921], 190, note 28) and by other scholars.

In view of the general agreement on the matter among present-day students, Mann's note to a letter, sent in 1483 by the Karaites of Troki to their coreligionists in Constantinople (first communicated by A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 140, §37, then edited in full by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1139 ff.), seems odd indeed. Commenting on the reference in the letter to a "Book of Precepts" by Tobias, Mann, without much ado, identified the book as "also known by the title *Yehi Me'ōroth*" (*Texts and Studies*, II, 1143, note 28). See on it also my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 47 f. The letter (without the above note) was reprinted from Mann's edition by I. Halpern, in *Beith Yisrael be-Pōlin*, II, 234 f.

⁶⁷ This letter was published in Gottheil-Worrell's *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, 142–49, along with facsimiles, scanty notes and an English translation, and reedited in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 34–38. The new readings and restorations included in the revised edition were based on a reexamination of the original MSS (Fragments XXXI and XXXII) in the Freer Collection in Washington. Also incorporated were some of the corrections suggested by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 373 f., note 3.

⁶⁸ The *terminus ad quem* is derived from the fact that Abū Sa'ad ben Abū'l-Fadhl Sahl (Abraham ben Abi-Ḥesed Yashar) at-Tustarī, the recipient of Tobias' letter, was assassinated in 1048. See on him (and his brother), W. Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islām*, 68 ff.

The religious and communal allegiance of the Tustarī family was the subject of many studies and remains still undecided. Against Mann's insistence on the Tustarīs' Rabbinitism, new evidence was advanced recently in favor of the earlier thesis by Poznański suggesting that the Banū Tustar were of Karaite persuasion. Cf. S. D. Goitein, "Petitions to Fāṭimid Caliphs from the Cairo Genizah," *JQR* (N.S.), XLV (1954), 36 f.

Egypt,⁶⁹ we infer that between the years 1041 and 1048 this outstanding disciple of Palestinian Karaite masters had attained leadership of the Karaite sect in Byzantium. It clearly follows from the epistle that this leadership did not merely claim that vague attitude of respect which any group of people would offer to a compatriot of considerable academic stature. Tobias appears to wield a central and definitive authority. He promises to enact decrees in liturgical matters,⁷⁰ and his religious jurisdiction seems to embrace a far-flung network of Karaite communal units, centered around their own houses of worship.⁷¹ The concept that what may very well have been a nation-wide organization of Karaite communities in Byzantium was in existence before the middle of the eleventh century is a novelty indeed. It accords well with the revised chronology of early Karaite history, suggested all along in the present study.

INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATISM

No sufficient data are available for a successful reconstruction of the Karaite communal mechanism in the Empire. Still, it seems pertinent to pause and emphasize the existence of distinct religio-communal structures at a comparatively early stage of Karaite settlement in Byzantium. This does not contradict our "basic premises" of Karaite-Rabbanite fraternity of political destiny and intercommunal relations. Rather, it complements and balances these premises. Having seen what the two groups had in common, we must also recognize their fundamental differences.

These differences expressed themselves in religious issues and had to be embodied in autonomous institutions. Thus the Karaites maintained

⁶⁹ The object of that mission is unclear. Tobias implores Tustari "that he perform my request on account of which I have come down to this place." He reiterates that he "did not come to the Land of Egypt to beg anything of the elders... but I have come for one thing ...," and takes it for granted that his correspondent is well acquainted with the purpose of his visit. Nor is it evident that Tobias was accompanied by two members of his family, seeking a *personal* favor; he may have traveled to Egypt in the public service in the company of two other petitioners. If my reading of the last words in Fragment XXXII, line 1 (בעבור דבר אחרים instead of [אחר] בעבור דבר אחד) is correct, a mission in behalf of the community seems more plausible. See on it in detail my comments *ad loc.*

⁷⁰ Cf. "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," App., Letter B/II, lines 24-25: ואתקן שיני וחמישי שיברכו... בבתי כנסיות. The first editors entirely misunderstood the passage and considered שני וחמישי as denoting persons bearing the well-known Rabbinic academic title שני בחבורה, etc. The true meaning was recognized by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 374.

⁷¹ "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," App., Letter B/II, line 24: בכל קהילות ארץ אודם הקרובות והרחוקות. Cf. also the expression בבתי כנסיות (in the plural!), as quoted in the passage cited in our previous note.

independent places of worship, special rites and rules for the individual and his family, and a different calendar of fasts and feasts. Separate codes of marriage and purity and a sectarian interpretation of Divine Law helped to weld the group together. Nevertheless, these institutions of sectarian separatism remain fully compatible with the basic consciousness of a larger unity which embraced the other group as well. A common historical outlook and experience were shared by both factions even after the Karaites had consolidated into a nation-wide self-containing organization. These ties persisted also when, as will be suggested later, the Byzantine government officially recognized the autonomous religious status of the Karaites within the Jewish community in the Empire.

The fact that institutional separatism is so clearly evident in an early document, prior to the year 1048, allows us to infer that which we should have assumed in any event. Even from a general observation of social behavior and of the age-long experience of Jewish history we should have realized that the Karaites would tend at the very outset to settle in Byzantium *in groups*, so that the requirements of their ritual could be met with less difficulty. Indeed, it is by no means a coincidence that the recollections of the Karaites concerning their settlement in Jerusalem, for instance, always represent the establishment of the Karaite colony in the city as the result of group work.⁷² Whatever the actual historical value of such recollections, they are a faithful guide to *the idea of the method of settlement* as conceived by the spokesmen of the sect in the tenth and the eleventh centuries, i.e., in the period of Karaite settlement in Byzantium. A minority within the Jewish people, the Karaites, on the one hand, quite naturally seized upon the slogan of "the righteous few, struggling in a community of sinners" and made it a convenient rationale for the hapless position of the sect in the Jewish world.⁷³ On the other hand, however, no amount of psychological

⁷² Cf. the comment by Salman ben Yerūham on Ps. 69:1, as communicated in Hebrew translation by Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, 22, and now finally available in its original phrasing through L. Marwick's edition of *The Arabic Commentary of Salmon ben Yerūham the Karaite on the Book of Psalms*, 98: חם טהר קום מן אלשרק ואלגרב פוארו חמסך באלרין ואלאגתהאר: האם טהר קצרו אלסכני פי ירושלם וזכרו ען נעמהם ואוטאנהם וזהו פי אלעאלם והם אלמן מקימן בבית ואלעלם וקצרו אלסכני פי ירושלם וזכרו ען נעמהם ואוטאנהם וזהו פי אלעאלם והם אלמן מקימן בבית אלמקום. See also the statements of Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ and of twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite writers quoted above, 45, note 53, and our remarks in the Introduction, 22.

⁷³ The Karaite "minority complex" pervades all the works of later Karaites from the tenth century on. Inadvertently, it offers an admission of the failure of Karaite propaganda and proof of the realization that the sect was doomed to remain but a small segment of the Jewish population. Cf., for instance, Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, in *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 34 f.: שאנחנו יורעים כי עשרת השבטים היו רבים משבט יהודה: ובנימין ועברו חרות וחלפו חק והפרו ברית עולם, בלעדי מעט מהם יראו את ה' ועשו מצותיו בסתר, ומלביהם

compensation was capable of alleviating the actual hardships which were the Karaites' daily share in a hostile Rabbanite environment. Bitter experience could not have failed to teach the sectaries that their peculiar ways and customs would be safeguarded only if backed by a strong, consolidated community.⁷⁴ For the day-to-day struggle often necessitated not only the moral but the sheer numerical and legal weight of an organized group in order to protect the freedom of the individual sectarian to worship according to rules of his choice or his ancestral heritage.⁷⁵ The persistently reiterated accusation by Karaite writers that the Rabbanites persecuted the sectaries physically, fiscally, through

ושופטיהם וחכמיהם החליפו העבודה זמני המועדים וביט החפלה ורוב המצות, אצ"פ שהם רבים, וגם יהודה ובנימין סרו באחרית מן הדרך והחליפו המצות בלתי אנשי מספר נסתרו מעיני הקהל ביראת שמים לעשות מצות ה', וכן כתוב (ירמ' ה' א) ששטבו בחוצות ירושלם וגו', ובתוב (יתו' ט' ד) והתרתו חו על מצות האנשים הנאמרים והנאנקים, להודיע כי אנשי אמת ויראי אלהים היו מעטים מן הקהל, ואיך יכשר ללכת בדרך הרבים על כל אודות, והתורה אומרת (שמ' כג ב) לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעות

Of the Byzantine Karaite statements on the subject cf. *Ḥillūḳ haḳ-Ḳara'im we ha-Rabbanim*, in *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. XII, 101, where a highly interesting gloss is given from one of the MSS of the tract: מעטים הם המטכילים הם מעטים (נ"א: כי המטכילים הם מעטים). And again, *ibid.*, 104: וכאשר יתפארו הרבנים כי חכמיהם היו מתנה גדול וחכמי הקראים א': או ב' או ג' ואיך מצאו המעטים מתרבים? אמרתי ואיך הבינ איוב בדת אלהים מארבעת התרבים? וא"א [=ואברהם אבינו] מכל גויי הארץ? וכלב ויהושע מעשרת המרגלים? והנאמרים והנאנקים מירושבי ירושלים? ומבראשונה מעטים היו הנמצאים בטוב, ואל הרע רבים, ע"כ מגיד מראשית אחרית הזהירו בתורתו ואמר לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעות

Cf. also the *piyyūṭ* by Tobias ben Moses, quoted in the latter part of note 75, below.

⁷⁴ Cf. the stress on establishing "a consolidated group" in Jerusalem in the very earliest appeal of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, as published by Mann, "A Tract of an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921-22), 285, and quoted above, *Introd.*, 22: שלחו מכל עיר תמשה אנשים ומחיתם עמם למען נהיה לאגודה אחת להחנות אל אלהינו תמיד. על הרי ירוש' L. Nemoj's rendering of the phrase *le-ma'an niyeh la-'agūdah aḥath* as "so that we may form one sizable community" is inexact. It misses the obvious emphasis on the *unity and communal strength of an organized group* and leaves only the element of mere numerical force. Cf. *Karaite Anthology*, 38, §9.

On Daniel al-Ḳūmisī cf. I. Markon, "Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, ein karäischer Schriftenklärer des IX. Jahrhunderts," in *Korespondenzblatt der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, VIII (1927), 18 ff.; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 8 ff., where all the earlier literature and the editions of Daniel's writings are listed and evaluated; and, recently, Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 30 ff. An edition of Daniel's Commentary on the Minor Prophets, contemplated by the late I. Markon (cf. his Hebrew "The Karaite Daniel ben Moses al-Ḳūmisī and his Commentary on the Minor Prophets," *Melilah*, II [1946], 188 ff.), now finally published. Cf. below, Chapter VII.

⁷⁵ Cf., for instance, Daniel al-Ḳūmisī in the already cited "Tract," ed. Mann, *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921-22), 285: כי מחלת גלות היו רבנין שרים ושופטים... ולא יכלו דורשי תורה לפתוח פיהם במצות י"י מחד רבנין... עד בוא מלכות ישמעאל כי הם עוררים תמיד לקראין לשמור כחורת ואשר לא יתן על פיהם יקדשו עליו מלחמה ומתגדלים... והצאן לא ירעו ולא ילמדום ומתגברים ומתגברים עליהם בנדיב ובחרם ובשליטי הנכרים ועונשים ענייהם ומצריכים אותם לקחת ברבית ולתת להם ולוקחים מהם ונותנים לשליטים אשר יחזקו את ידיהם עליהם... והצאן לא ירעו ולא ילמדום מצוה להועיל, ואם יפתח אחד מהם את פיו בשאלה ויאמר כן וכן ישגאו אותו וילחמו עמו

recourse to non-Jewish authorities and through unrelenting social pressure, cannot be wholly invented. While, no doubt, many of these charges became after some time literary clichés, indiscriminately copied by successive generations of Karaite polemicists, they should not be easily discarded as originally untrue. The often-reported disputes and quarrels over calendar discrepancies, which were particularly acute on account of the close proximity in which the two groups dwelt, are a recurrent example of such circumstances.⁷⁶

THE QUADRILATERAL STRUCTURE OF KARAITE HISTORY

We are now in a position to summarize our investigation into the historical premises of Karaite origins in Byzantium.

The *religio-institutional separatism* of the Karaite sect in the Middle Ages must be viewed in conjunction with the three basic phenomena of *political, social and economic unity* governing the history of Rabbanites and Karaites alike. Karaite separatism is the fourth phenomenon without which the structure of Karaite history would not be complete. However,

Cf. also the (Byzantine?) text, an extract from a commentary on Psalms, published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 112-13 (App. X): כן יש[ראל] בגולה עמהם: תורת י"י אשר היא באפיקי מים ומרוב רשעי יש[ראל] לא יוכל איש לאמ' זה הדרך לכו כי רבים מוש' יערבו על התורה ולא יוכלו לומ' זה האמת כי יפחדו שלא ימיתום אלא שומרים אותם בלבם עד ישקיף יירא י"י משמים ואז יוכלו לדבר ולריב.

Ibid., 89 f. (App. II, No. 5), an extract was published from an Arabic commentary on Canticles in which Cant. 5:7 is also interpreted as an allusion to Rabbanite persecutions of the Karaites. Mann failed, however, to recognize that the text at hand was the original source from which a Hebrew abridgment was made in Byzantium and incorporated by Jacob ben Reuben into his *Sefer ha-'Osher*. See on it below, Chapter VII. Cf. there also the Eng. version of a *piyyūt* by Tobias ben Moses, included in the Vilna edition of the *Karaite Prayerbook*, IV, 208: שממוני יסרוני, שממוני הם בכל עת לי מריבים: יש בחוך [=בתוכם] עוים כדבים: הן אני חד הם רבים: מעריצים מלטני יסרוני: הם בכל עת לי מריבים: יש בחוך [=בתוכם] עוים כדבים: הן אני חד הם רבים: מעריצים מלטני. Innumerable charges to the same effect are hurled against the Rabbanites from scores of pages of *Eshkol hak-Kofer* by Yehūdah Hadassi, and it is simply impossible to list them here.

The persecution of Karaites reached the peak of violence in Spain where three generations of Rabbanite courtiers waged against their sectarian compatriots a ruthless war of extermination. Cf. Y. F. Baer, *Toledoth hay-Yehūdīm bi-Sefarad han-Nozerith*, I, 48, 55, and the sources listed there, 313, note 45.

In view of the above, L. Nemoj's statement (*Karaite Anthology*, ix) that "the conflict, sharp as it was, remained throughout a war of words and never degenerated into physical violence or armed warfare," can hardly be accepted. See my brief comment in *JSS*, XV (1953), 312.

⁷⁶ See our discussion of the calendar feuds between Rabbanites and Karaites in Chapter VII, below. Cf. also my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 25-38, XXV (1956), 157-69.

the tendency to focus on this phenomenon alone, as if it were the guiding spirit of the social and spiritual endeavor of the Karaites, is misleading. It ignores the *actual unity of deed and purpose* and, what is more important, the *consciousness of unity* pervading the two camps all through the Middle Ages. It unwittingly obscures a basic trait in the historical picture of Karaism, namely, that it never ceased to be a sect *within* the Jewish people and that precisely because of this sense of "belonging" it continued to play a role in medieval Jewish life. The realization of the quadrilateral structure of Karaite history is therefore of utmost importance when an attempt is made to theorize about the origins of Karaite settlement on Byzantine soil.

CHAPTER II

BYZANTINE BEGINNINGS: VARIOUS THEORIES

THE CHALLENGING problem of Byzantine Karaite origins has never been thoroughly examined. Of the few theories thus far advanced, two can summarily be dismissed, since the very premises on which they are based are themselves in need of proof; they assume the early existence of Karaites in the Crimea, whence they supposedly gravitated to the Bosphorus,¹ or a special kinship between Karaism and judaized Khazaria.²

THE "CRIMEAN" THEORY

While declining to pass judgment, in 1866, on the authenticity of the documentary and epigraphical material from Jewish settlements in the Crimea,³ Neubauer considered the Crimean Peninsula the cradle of *Hebrew* Karaite literature. Here, prompted by needs which were absent in Arabic-speaking countries, a Hebrew style and a Hebrew terminology were supposedly perfected to suit the demands of scholarly research.⁴ These Crimean contributions were assumed to have been handed down later to the new center of the sect in Byzantium; there they conditioned Byzantine Karaite creativity in the field of Hebrew literature.

Neubauer postulated further that Karaite scholars must have migrated from the Crimea to Byzantium in quest of general learning, especially astronomy.⁵ As proof of this assertion Neubauer pointed to the Tataric, hence Crimean, surnames of some of the Karaite scholars in Byzantium, e.g., Beghi, Poki, Tchelebi, etc.⁶

¹ Cf. A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 35, 69.

² See below, 64 f., notes 20–22.

³ *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 29, 33, 137. The thorough investigation of the Crimean finds was still to come; cf. note 7, below. Of course, Neubauer himself was aware of the difficulties arising from some of these finds.

⁴ *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 55. This stands somewhat in contradiction to Firkowicz's opinion that the migration was rather in the opposite direction and that the Crimea served as a refuge for Byzantine Karaite scholars (regarding this theory see Harkavy's *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*, 183, and 162, note 6). Even Hadassi was transplanted to the Crimea.

⁶ *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 55, note 1.

Now, even if one were to accept Neubauer's purely literary approach to the history of Jewish sectarianism, one could not fail to perceive the questionable quality of the proofs adduced in its support. To begin with the last-mentioned argument, Neubauer's deduction from the Tataric surnames of Byzantine Karaite scholars projects into the early history of Byzantine Karaism usages that resulted from a late and entirely different general situation. The occurrence of Turkicized names is not attested to among the Karaites of Byzantium before the fifteenth century, i.e., when the imperial provinces had come under Turkish domination.

Moreover, the entire "Crimean" theory was built upon material assembled and partly garbled by Abraham Firkowicz, the notorious leader of Russian Karaites.⁷ He and other nineteenth-century Karaite spokesmen, who claimed antiquity for Karaite settlement in the Crimean peninsula, were prompted more by political expediency than by scholarly considerations. They attempted to give credence to an alleged chronological precedence of Karaism over Rabbinism on Russian soil, as well as to Karaism's alleged independence from the general course of Jewish history.⁸

Now, *l'affaire Firkowicz*, and even more so the sorry spectacle of posthumous condemnation of the *man* down to our own time, cannot

⁷ See the brief account on Firkowicz, *Jewish Enc.*, V, 393 f., and on Crimean Jewry in general, *ibid.*, IV, 359 ff. The material produced by Firkowicz—partly described in Pinner's *Prospectus* as early as 1845, then offered in fragments in Pinsker's *Likḳūtē Qadmoniyoth* (1860), and finally in Firkowicz's own *Abnē Zikkarōn* (1872)—gave rise to a veritable host of publications, several of which were not entirely above partisan bias. While D. Chwolson (*Achtzehn hebräische Grabinschriften aus der Krim* and *Corpus Inscriptionum Hebraicarum*) defended the authenticity of the data furnished by Firkowicz, scholars like Rappaport, Geiger, Schorr and Neubauer pointed already in the 1860's to the chronological and factual difficulties stemming from some of the material at hand. Still, Pinsker, Fürst and Graetz unhesitatingly accepted the finds and based upon them their expositions of general Jewish and Karaite history.

Accusation of outright forgery became general by 1875, following the joint work of H. Strack and A. Harkavy on the *Catalog der hebr. Bibelhandschriften*, and later through the separate works of Strack on *A. Firkowitsch und seine Entdeckungen* and of Harkavy on the *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*. P. F. Frankl followed up these studies by a Hebrew critique in *Hashshaḥar*, VII–VIII (1876–77), and by German articles in the *MGWJ*. On a lower level of debate we find such biased a presentation as E. Deinard's *Massā' Krim*.

On Firkowicz's procedure of editing and "correcting" Karaite books printed in Gozlow, see above, 28, note 5, and below, 71.

⁸ See the account given by Harkavy, *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*, 206 ff., and, briefly, in *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 444 ff. Cf. also R. Fahn, "The Jewish *Maskilim* and Karaite Scholars" (Hebrew), *Haṭteḳūfah*, XII (1921), 189 ff., XIII (1921), 244 ff., and esp. XIV–XV (1922), 398 ff. Fahn shows that Firkowicz's policy was opposed by prominent Karaite leaders.

detain us here. Both those who shook an accusing finger at Firkowicz and those who indiscriminately endeavored to vindicate all his finds unwittingly ascribed to him standards of scholarly discipline and ethics which were unknown to him. His was a tradition of generations of oriental manuscript collectors, copyists and glossers who, like him, felt no qualms about pious "emendations" of texts or *bona fide* interpolations. However, none of his predecessors equaled Firkowicz in zeal and instinct for the important, and none has put modern scholarship, as he did, in such tremendous debt for the unparalleled literary treasures which he single-handedly assembled. Indeed, an indiscriminate rejection of all documents that passed through the hands of Firkowicz would be no less unwarranted than was the original blind acceptance of all his discoveries.⁹ Nevertheless, so far as Crimean Karaite antiquities are concerned, the matter seems to have been thoroughly scrutinized by Harkavy. Although Harkavy's own theories regarding the history of Crimean Jewry also leave much to be desired,¹⁰ his major criticism of Firkowicz's *data* remains unquestionably valid.¹¹

In reality, the first *authentic* record of Karaism in the Crimea—an eye-witness account of a calendar feud between the Karaites and Rabbanites in Sulkhāt (Eski Krim)—does not antedate the last quarter of the thirteenth century.¹² Allowing some three or four generations for a preliterate period of settlement and growth, the beginnings of organized Karaite life in the Peninsula can be placed, at the very earliest, some time in the latter half of the twelfth century.

⁹ Thus, more than 200 manuscripts from the two great Firkowicz Collections were utilized in Volume II alone of J. Mann's *Texts and Studies* which is wholly devoted to Karaitic research. Cf. the list there, 1482–85. Harkavy himself, H. J. Gurland, Neubauer, I. Markon, S. Assaf, and others edited many more fragments. Skoss, Nemoy, Birnbaum, and, recently, Marwick followed suit with the publication of whole Karaite compositions on the basis of the Firkowicz MSS; countless works or leaves remain to this day unpublished. Cf. also P. Kahle, *The Cairo Genizah*, 2 ff.

¹⁰ See the critique of these theories by A. N. Poliak in *Kazzariyyah*, *passim*.

¹¹ I hope to return to the problem some time in the future, in connection with a projected "History of the Karaites in Turkey, Russia and Poland."

¹² Cf. Aaron ben Joseph in his Commentary on Exodus, *Mibhar*, 14b: וְהָיָה לְרִבְנִים מוֹלֵד חֲשָׁרִי וְאֶנְחָנוּ דְרֵינּוּ הִישָׁן עֲשָׂרָה שָׁנָה קֹדֶם זֶה הַפִּירוּשׁ שָׁנָה ל־ט בְּפֶרֶט [= 1278] והיה לרבנים מולד חשרי ואנחנו דרינו הישן עשרה שנה קודם זה הפירוש שנה ל-ט בפרט. See also on the problem of Crimean Karaite chronology P. F. Frankl, in his "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 4, and in *Ersch und Gruber Encz.*, Section Two, XXXIII (1883), 22 f. and notes. On Sulkhāt cf. Harkavy, *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*, 34 ff.

For a critical analysis and refutation of the Karaite claim concerning an alleged migration of Crimean Karaites to Halicz, Poland, in the *first* half of the thirteenth century, see M. Balaban, "On the History of the Karaites in Poland" (Hebrew), *Hattekfusah*, XVI (1922), 294 ff.

Indeed, it is perhaps in this context that we should read the famous account by the Rabbanite traveler, Petaḥyah of Regensburg, of his encounter with “heretics” in the “Land of Ḳedar” in the year 1175, i.e., one century prior to the Sulkhāt incident.¹³

IN THE LAND OF KEDAR

Petaḥyah’s description of the customs in the “Land of Ḳedar” has drawn the attention of many scholars and has been variously interpreted. The region as such is not identical with the Crimea. It probably denotes the general area of present-day Southern Russia, which would include parts of the Crimea and of medieval Khazaria.¹⁴

Why no Rabbanites lived in that region is a matter for speculation.¹⁵ At any rate, the way of life these “heretical” settlers were leading was unmistakably Karaite. Indeed, their extreme strictness in the observance of the Sabbath is usually identified with the early ninth-century Karaite legislation of the an-Nahāwendī school.¹⁶ And yet, this strictness does not necessarily imply a ninth-century origin of the settlement in the

¹³ Cf. *Sibbūb* (ed. Grünhut), 4: ובארץ קדר אין יהודים ויש שם מינים ואמר להם הר' פתחיה למה אינכם מאמינים בדברי חכמים. אמרו בשביל שלא למדום אבותינו. ובערב שבת חותכין הלחם ואוכלין בחשך ויושבין במקום אחד כל היום ואינם מתפללים אלא מזמורים. וכשספר להם ר' פתחיה התפלה שלגו וברכת המזון היה טוב בעיניהם. ואמרו לא שמענו מעולם מה הוא תלמוד.

¹⁴ Petaḥyah clearly distinguishes between the “Land of Ḳedar” and the “Land of Khazaria,” by which the Crimea proper is meant. Cf. *Sibbūb*, 3: ומהלך יום אחד בארץ ומהלך יום אחד בארץ בין ארץ קדר ובין ארץ כוריא. The appellation “Khazaria” (or in its Italian form “Gazaria”) for the Crimea goes back to the last stages of Khazar history and persisted into the sixteenth century. See, for instance, the text quoted below, 63, note 18, from Kaleb Afendopolo’s *Nahal ha-Eshkol* (written in 1497). Similarly, see the text by the same author, as excerpted by A. Danon from *Pathshegen Kethab had-Dath*, in *JQR* (N.S.), XVII (1927), 169. In that fragment two Crimean cities are clearly listed as “communities of Khazaria.” Cf. also in the same essay, 171, the paragraph in which one of these cities is again mentioned but Khazaria and the “Lands (!) of Ḳedar” are equated.

¹⁵ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 289, surmised that “perhaps owing to peculiar political circumstances, the Rabbanites refrained from living in a territory isolated from the rest of Jewry. Or it may be that the Karaites obtained exclusive charters which protected them against economic competition on the part of the Rabbanites.”

¹⁶ The teachings of Benjamin an-Nahāwendī, who was regarded by Karaite tradition as second only to ‘Anan, are partly available in Benjamin’s *Mas’ath Binjamin* (published by Firkowicz as an appendix to Aaron ben Joseph’s *Mibḥar Yesharim*) and in the fragments appended by Harkavy to his reconstruction of ‘Anan’s “Book of Precepts,” *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 178–84. The major features of the Benjaminite doctrine were summed up by Ḳirḳisānī in his *Kitāb al-Anwār* (ed. Nemoy), I, 55–56; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 386–87. On his Sabbath laws see Ḳirḳisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, III, 508 f., 521 f., 555 f. For a general sketch of an-Nahāwendī’s activity see Poznański, *Oṣar Yisrael*, III, 126b–129b, and, recently, Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 21 ff. Cf., also below, Chapter V.

region. The same modes of Sabbath observance were, after all, forcefully preached both in Eastern Karaism and among the sectaries of Byzantium at least as late as the middle or the second half of the twelfth century.¹⁷ Thus, the dissenters in Southern Russia may well have been the sons of twelfth-century(!) immigrants, stemming from Islamic countries or from the Empire where these traditions were still prevailing in some pietistic circles. Indeed, for all we know, they themselves may have possibly been the earliest Karaite settlers in the region.

The general ignorance of the Karaites in the "Land of Qedar" is, of course, undeniable. They had little, if any, knowledge of the literature developed by the sect back in the "old country." How else can we explain the fact that they were unaware of the Talmud, the mainstay of normative Judaism and the chief target of Karaite literary assault? However, the alleged uniqueness of this ignorance, which has led the scholars to the conclusion that the South Russian sectaries were living in utter isolation for *many* long generations, seems to have been grossly overemphasized.

The assumption that the situation was basically different elsewhere is not necessarily warranted. The truth of the matter is that we have no explicit information whatsoever on the state of education of the average Karaite in other communities in the Middle Ages. If an impression can be formed at all from the available Karaite literature, it is one pertaining merely to the handful of scholars who resided in the main centers of sectarian activity. The rank and file of the populations anywhere remained evidently at a rather low level of erudition. It is only to be expected that the situation in remote communities, especially where the non-Jewish environment also was one of illiteracy and ignorance, must have been considerably worse.

¹⁷ An intelligent presentation of the halakhic differences between the old Karaite school (of Benjamin an-Nahāwendi) and later innovators was given in *Ohel Mosheh* by the sixteenth-century Turkish Karaite Moses Beghi. There also the perpetuation of some old concepts and ways in Constantinople, as late as the middle of the twelfth century (Hadassi!), is stressed. Cf. the fragment published by Mann, in his *Texts and Studies*, II, 1453-56: דע שחכמים קדמונים ע"ה מזמן חלוק הקראים עם הרבנים חשבו להוציא: באור כל העניינים מצד הכתובים בין לאטור בין להתר ונטו אחרי החמרה כדי להראות ההפרש הגדול שבין עדת הקראים הסומכים על החתוב ובין הרבנים הסומכים על הקבלה להתרחק מהם ריחוק גדול. . . כמה עניינים סברו חכמי קדם באטורם ע"צ [=על צד] החמרה. והחכמים הבאים אחריהם ראו בהתר. . . ובפרט בענין מצות שבת שרבינו בנימין האונדי [=הנהאונדי] ג"ע פירש פסוק שבו איש תחתיו (שמ' ט"ז בט) על האמת והסכים בזה רבינו יוסף הקרקסאני ג"ע אבל הצריך תנאים. תחמינו הבאים אחריהם השיבו על זו הסברה ולא ישרה בעיניהם. וכמו סברת רבינו סהל שאמר מפסוק (שמ' ט"ז ה) והיה ביום הששי והכינו א"א [=את אשר יביאו]. אמר שיהיו כלי המאכל והמשתה מוכנים מיום ששי ושלא להצריך ושלא להעתיקם מהשלחן בשבת ולכרות ככרי הלחם מיום ששי שיהיו מוכנים לאכלם. . . ובמו אלו אטר דברים אחרים. החריר יחודה (הדסי) האבל ג"ע מוה הסברה גם כן

Viewed in this perspective, the picture presented by Petaḥyah does not require one to assume a long period of isolation from the roots of the movement and a correspondingly early date for Karaite settlement in the region. On the contrary: had these people been removed for a very long time from the sources of sectarian teaching and lived in such sorry isolation from any Jewish (Rabbanite or Karaite) influence *as they did when Petaḥyah met them*, they could hardly have persisted in so meticulously observing the customs of their fathers. Granted, cases of inert, centuries-long *perpetuation* of certain practices in spite of adverse circumstances are well attested to in Jewry's chequered history. However, the *conscious perseverance* in the ancestral tradition, as manifested by the South Russian Karaites, cannot be attributed, so it seems, to mere inertia. Their knowledge of Hebrew Psalms which, in the Karaite fashion, served them as daily prayers, is clearly evidenced by Petaḥyah. Indeed, they must have had more than a rudimentary acquaintance with the language, for they surely conversed in Hebrew with the traveler from Regensburg and understood the rather extensive Hebrew text of the prayer (probably the 'Amidah, i.e., the "Eighteen Benedictions") and the *Birkath ham-Mazōn* (=Grace after Meals) which he recited before them.

On the other hand, it is obvious that at the time of Petaḥyah's visit in the region the Crimean Karaites were still in a preliterate stage of their history. The awakening of literary activity among them was yet to come, prompted partly by the impact of closer ties with their Karaite brethren in Byzantium who in the twelfth century already had a well-established tradition of scholarship.¹⁸ In addition, an actual immigration to the Crimean regions of Karaite scholars from the Empire may have taken place in the wake of the Fourth Crusade (1204) and may have influenced Karaite development in the Crimea. At any rate, when Crimean Karaism appeared on the scene, the Byzantine branch of the

¹⁸ Cf. S. Dubnow, *Dibrē Yemē 'Am 'Ölam*, IV, 266. An interesting example of cultural contacts between Byzantine and Crimean Karaites is afforded by the history of *Eshkol hak-Kofer* manuscripts in the Middle Ages. The story is told by the late fifteenth-century epitomizer of this great Byzantine Karaite encyclopedia. While not a single complete copy of the book was to be found in the latter part of the fifteenth century in Constantinople, where Yehūdah Hadassī had created the work three centuries earlier, the full version of the *Eshkol* was circulating in the Crimean Karaite communities. Cf. Kaleb Afendopolo, *Naḥal ha-Eshkol* (preceding the printed edition of *Eshkol hak-Kofer*), 1c-d: אמר כלב ההעק הנמצא אתנו באלה הנגלילות היה חסר מתחלת הספר עד אות יו"ד מאל"פא בי"חא התשע עשרה כי נתעפשו עלי הספר ודלתיו ונפסדו לגמרי: . . . והנה אם אלהים יזכני להניע בידי ספר שלם מתחלתו כפי מה שספר לי אחי תלמידי בן אבי ואמי יהודה בלי יצ"ו שנמצא בנגלילות כזריא [=קרים] שהיה שם בשנה שעברה היא שנת רנ"ו לפרט האלף הששי [=1496] שראוהו שלם, אבאר אז ביתוד.

sect had already passed the peak of its formative process and had reached a high level of literary creativity.¹⁹

THE "KHAZAR" THEORY

The second theory also is based upon a premise which had long been pronounced untenable by most students of Jewish history. It assumes that the Turkic Khazars, who at a certain juncture of their history accepted Judaism, were actually initiated into the Jewish fold by Karaite teachers and consequently followed Karaite doctrine.²⁰ Having lost their independence, so goes the theory, the Khazars must have found refuge during the late tenth and the eleventh centuries in the Byzantine Empire and thus gave rise to a Karaite community on Byzantine soil.²¹

¹⁹ Chances are, of course, that the "heretics" encountered by Petaḥyah were not Karaites at all, as suggested above, but judaized Khazars. Cf., most recently, S. W. Baron, in the monumental new edition of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 201 ff. "The similarity between some Khazar customs, such as sitting in the dark on the Sabbath, and Karaite observances" should, according to the opinion of Professor Baron, not be construed as proof of Karaite allegiance of Petaḥyah's interlocutors. "Ignorance of talmudic laws, rather than outright Karaite influences as erroneously assumed by Petaḥyah, induced them [i.e., the Khazars] to fall back upon the biblical legislation."

²⁰ This view was expounded by Firkowicz and countered by the scholars listed above, 59, note 7. See also Poznański, in *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 671b. Some of the "Khazar Karaite" texts were included in Neubauer's *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 132 ff.

The voluminous literature concerning Khazaria and her conversion to Judaism cannot, of course, be even partly enumerated here. The most recent English treatment of the subject is D. M. Dunlop's *History of the Jewish Khazars*, where especially the Arabic texts are well utilized and integrated in the narrative. My reservations in regard to Dunlop's appraisal of the Hebrew texts and to his discussion of the Khazars' Jewishness were expressed in a review published in *Judaism*, V (Spring, 1956), 185-88. The Hebrew texts concerning Khazaria were critically edited by P. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-Khazar'skaya Perepiska v X Veke*.

The best modern Hebrew presentation of Khazar history and of the problems involved is the already-quoted *Kazzariyyah* by A. N. Poliak, of which three editions have been published to date. Corresponding in time to Poliak's book and essays on the Khazar theme, but different in conclusions, is the valuable Hebrew survey of "The Present State of the Khazar Problem," by M. Landau, *Zion*, VIII (1942-43), 94-106, as well as his earlier *Beiträge zum Chazarenproblem*. I, for one, concur with Poliak's general approach and evaluation of the Hebrew texts. His broader conclusions, however, regarding the ethnic origin of Russo-Polish Jewry, must for the time being be treated with diffidence. Cf. also the brief summary by P. Kahle, *The Cairo Genizah*, 14 ff., and Baron, *op. cit.*, III, 196 ff.

²¹ Cf., for instance, J. Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 190. Fürst placed the rise of Karaite settlement in Byzantium in the eleventh century, adding also Armenia to the regions from which an influx of Karaite immigrants to the Empire was allegedly in progress at that time. While the origin of his "Khazar" theory is obvious, the sources for his "Armenian" theory are not given. I presume that he based his surmise

Again, in its original form the "Khazar" theory was but another function of the same nineteenth-century political tendency which produced the "Crimean" theory mentioned above. It was expounded mainly by the same writers, invoking the same body of questionable material that was mustered in support of Karaite antiquity in the Crimea. Modern exponents of Khazar-Karaite kinship have quite correctly abandoned that line of argumentation. They speak of the Karaites as *heirs*, rather than ancestors, of *Khazar culture*. Assuming a Turkic character of Khazar society, they hope to reconstruct its traits through the study of linguistic testimonies admittedly preserved by certain Turkic-speaking groups surviving to this day. Especially the Cumano-Karaimic (Kiptchak) dialect, spoken by Karaites living in Poland and Russia, and several ideas and concepts prevalent among these sectaries to our own time, are hailed as faithful echoes of the extinct culture of medieval Khazars.²²

Of course, a review of that material, so important for the understanding of the cultural history of Khazaria and of *later* Karaite communities of Eastern Europe, is entirely beyond the scope of the present study.²³ Instead, we shall perhaps be contributing more to the elucidation of the Khazar-Karaite problem by presenting here whatever testimony may be gleaned on the subject from *early Karaite literature*. In that way the *original Karaite concept of Khazaria* might speak for itself.^{23a}

JEWISH KHAZARIA: INHERENT PROPAGANDA VALUE

When viewing Jewish Khazaria from the vantage-point of Karaite literature, one detects no sign whatsoever of a religious bond between the Karaites and the Khazars, let alone a recollection of common ancestral ties. The rich Karaite literature of the Golden Age, both

on the fact that a sectarian leader, Mūsā az-Za'farānī, known also as Abū 'Imrān at-Tifisī, was active in Armenia in the ninth century. Fürst considered, of course, all sectarian movements as coming under the common denominator of Karaism.

²² Cf. A. Zajączkowski, *Ze studiów nad zagadnieniem chazarским* (Etudes sur le problème des Khazars), esp. 62 ff.; French résumé, 98 f. Cf. also his more popular Polish presentation of his central thesis concerning "Khazar Culture and its Heirs," in *Mysl Karaimska* (N.S.), I (1946), 5 ff.

²³ These lexical carry-overs from a Turkic environment, treated so far from the standpoint of Turkic linguistics and folklore, will be interpreted in broader terms of Karaite history in my projected study of Karaism in Turkey, Russia and Poland.

^{23a} A maximalistic stand *ad maiorem Karaeorum gloriam*, viewing the Karaites as *both* ancestors and heirs to the great Khazaro-Cumanic cultural expanse, has been taken recently by S. Szyszman in his "Les Khazars—problèmes et controverses," *RHR*, CLII (1957), 174 ff.; "Le roi Bulan et le problème de la conversion des Khazars,"

that contemporary with the last stages of Jewish Khazar history²⁴ and that which followed closely after the downfall of Jewish leadership in the crippled Khazar state,²⁵ fails to observe the presence of Karaite ways among the Khazars.²⁶ The lack of such assertions on the part of Karaites is highly significant. It stands in direct contrast to the usual triumphant note of Karaite missionary accounts.²⁷

The winning over of the Khazars to Karaism could surely have been presented as a great achievement of Karaite teaching. Indeed, true to accepted medieval criteria of religious justification, such an achievement might have been construed, in turn, as demonstration of the correctness of the sectarian doctrine. The obvious propaganda value of such an ideological conquest was well appreciated by medieval writers.

This fact becomes even more apparent when it is confronted by the attitude toward the same matter in quarters opposed to Karaism. Thus, later Rabbanites were not beyond using arguments of this kind in their own interests. Claiming that the Khazars actually followed *Rabbanite* tradition, they cited this belief as proof of the universality of their own creed in contrast to the negligible influence of the dissident teachings. Rabbinism, the victorious trend in world-Jewry, has reached the farthest corners of the earth, they argued. It even penetrated

Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXXIII (1957), 70 ff.; and "Die Karäer in Ost-Mitteleuropa," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, VI (1957), 24 ff. While offering some valuable references and interesting insights, these studies have, unfortunately, no bearing on our present discussion. To Szyszman the Khazars' conversion to Karaism is *a priori* so self-evident that no documentation seems necessary, whereas this is precisely the problem which I propose to analyze in the following pages on the basis of primary Karaite material.

²⁴ E.g., the literary creations of Ǧirkisānī, Salman ben Yerūham, Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, Yefeth ben 'Alī, David al-Fāsī, who lived in the tenth century.

²⁵ A. N. Poliak has proven conclusively that the tenth- and early eleventh-century blows, at first erroneously credited by scholars with inflicting a final defeat on Khazaria, only crippled the Khazar state. A weaker and smaller Khazaria continued to exist until the Mongol invasions in the middle of the thirteenth century. Poliak's additional thesis, however, which suggests that the *state* remained Jewish to the end—indeed, even more ardently devoted to Judaism than before—is not convincing. Nevertheless, Judaized *groups*, whether of Khazar or other origin, continued late into the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Cf. Halevy's essay in the Polish *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, XXI (Jan.–March, 1957), 93 ff., and T. Lewicki's comments there, 100 ff.

²⁶ Hints as to Khazar allegiance to Karaism could be expected from Karaite spokesmen of the eleventh century, such as Joseph al-Baṣīr, Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, 'Alī ben Suleimān, Tobias ben Moses and, later, from Jacob ben Reuben.

²⁷ Cf., e.g., the tenth-century Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, as quoted below, Chapter VI, note 2, in his enthusiastic report of the spread of Karaite ways in Palestine. Cf. there also, note 25, the account of Karaite successes in Byzantium, quoted from the eleventh-century Byzantine Karaite commentary on Leviticus, *Oṣar Neḥmad*. See further my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 17.

as far as the river Itil, where the Khazar nations dwelt. These converted to Judaism, and their king, Joseph, sent an epistle to the Prince Rabbi Hisday ben Rabbi Isaac ben Shaprūt relating to him that he as well as his people follow the Rabbanite way. Indeed, we have seen in Toledo some of their descendants, [talmudic] scholars, who informed us that their remnant was of Rabbanite persuasion.²⁸

This passage from Ibn Daūd's anti-Karaite pamphlet is not cited here as conclusive *proof* of the Khazars' Rabbinism. It is intended only to bring into sharp relief the later Rabbanite *claims* with regard to the religious convictions of the Khazars as part of the Rabbanite propaganda drive against sectarianism. The *absence of such claims* on behalf of contemporary spokesmen of Karaism cannot be coincidental. For, had there been any truth to the purported indebtedness of the Khazars to the Karaites in matters of religion, Karaite literature would not have allowed this fact to pass unnoticed.

KHAZARIA IN KARAITE LITERATURE: THE STORY OF INDIFFERENCE

But this evidence from silence does not stand alone.

Karaite literature itself speaks to us on a few occasions about the Khazars and leaves no doubt as to the secondary and rather vague position Khazaria occupied in Karaite thinking. The earliest testimony mentioning the Khazars and their Jewishness comes from Jacob al-Ḳirḳisānī, the Karaite historian and jurist of the first half of the tenth century.²⁹ Elaborating on Genesis 9:27 (*yaft elohim le-yefeth*), Ḳirḳisānī has this to say:³⁰

The *majority of commentators* interpret this pun to mean loveliness and beauty. In their opinion, the sense of the verse is that God has beautified Japheth to the extent that a number of his descendants will enter into the Jewish faith

Now, *some other [commentators]* are of the opinion that this verse alludes to the Khazars who accepted Judaism. However, *others* hold that the Persians are here intended. These converted to Judaism in the time of Mordecai, Esther and Ahasuerus,

²⁸ Cf. Ibn Daūd's *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, in *Jewish Medieval Chronicles* (ed. Neubauer), I, 78 f.: ועוד שהם [=הקראים] בטלים במשומם שאתה מוצא קהלות ישראל שהיו פושטות ממדינת סלה בקצה המערב עד תארת בראש המערב וקצה אפריקה וכל ארץ אפריקה ומצרים וארץ הצבי וארץ ערב וארץ שבער וארץ עילם וארץ פרס וארץ דדן וארץ הגרנשי ונקרא גרגאן וטברטאן ואל דילס עד נהר אתל שהיו שם עמים כוזריים שנתגייירו ויוסף מלכם שלה ספר לר' חסדאי הנשיא בר' יצחק בן שפרוט והודיעו שהוא על דעת רבנות וכל עמו וראינו בטוליטולה מבני בניהם חלמידי חכמים והודיעונו ששאריתם על דעת רבנות.

²⁹ Of the most recent literature on Ḳirḳisānī see G. Vajda's "Etudes sur Qirḳisānī," *REJ*, CVI (1941-45) 87-123, CVII (1946-47), 52-98, CVIII (1948), 63-91, and the brief introduction to an English selection from *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāḳib* (Book of Lights and Watchtowers) and *Kitāb ar-Riyād wa-l-Ḥadā'ik* (Book of Gardens and Parks), in Nemoj's *Karaite Anthology*, 42 ff.

³⁰ The following passage given by Landau in *Zion*, VIII (1942-43), 96, is an excerpt from the *Book of Gardens and Parks*. Unlike the *Book of Lights* which found in L. Nemoj a faithful editor, the *Book of Gardens*—Ḳirḳisānī's principal work, containing an extensive commentary on the non-legal portions of the Pentateuch—

even as it is written (Esther 8:17), "And many among the people of the land became Jews."³¹

It must be remembered that Ẕirḳisānī was writing at a time when Khazaria had become the haven for Jewish refugees coming from both Muslim countries and Byzantium. The Judeo-centric orientation of tenth-century Khazar policy undoubtedly made a great impression on the Muslim East where Ẕirḳisānī was residing. Indeed, it was even recorded by a Muslim historian who reported the emigration to Khazaria of Byzantine Jews persecuted by Romanus I Lecapenus.³² This migration was contemporaneous with the very commentary of Ẕirḳisānī in which the above-quoted reference to the Khazars was made.³³ Moreover, having traveled extensively in the Near Eastern territories adjoining Khazaria,

remains to this day in manuscript form and was utilized very little by modern Karaite research. The introductory chapter of the work was edited by H. Hirschfeld, *Ẕirḳisānī Studies*, 39 ff., who, however, followed the copyist in erroneously identifying it as *Tafsīr Bereshith* (Commentary on Genesis). The mistake was rectified by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 336, 337, 396. Earlier, A. Neubauer edited the concluding portion of the book, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, II, 249 ff.

³¹ *Zion*, VIII (1942–43), 96: וישתקנהא וישתקנהא הלא אלכלמה וישתקנהא... מן אלגמאל ואלחסן. מעני דלך ענדה אן אללה סיחסן עלי יפת ויהמל חתי ירבל מנהם קום פי דין ישראל... ואלרין יועמן אן דלך ראנע אלי אלכזור אלרין תודו. ואלרין זעמר אן דלך ראנע אלי אלפרס אלרין תהודו פי איאם מרדכי ואסתר ואחשוורוש או יקול ורבים מעמי הארץ מתיהדים.

³² Cf. al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb Murūj adh-Dhahab* (Les Prairies d'Or), ed. Meynard and Courbeille, II, 8f. See also J. Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 151 f., § 91; B. Z. Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael bag-Gōlah*, I, Pt. 1, 33; S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign*, 231; idem, *Byzantine Civilization*, 131; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 31 f.; and, most recently, Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 89.

An echo of the forced baptism (*hashmadah*) decreed by Romanus, nicknamed *ha-Rasha'* (=the Wicked), reaches us also through S. Schechter's "Unknown Khazar Document," *JQR* (N.S.), III (1913), 206. Cf. A. Kahana, *Sifrūth ha-Historyah hay-Yisr'elith*, I, 47, and P. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-Khazarskaya Peregiska*, 117. An allusion to the same event has been discovered in a Hebrew apocalypse by L. Ginzberg, *Ginzē Schechter*, 313 ff. This tenth-century *Hazōn Dani'el* was reedited by J. Ibn Shemūel [Kaufmann] in his anthology *Midreshē Gē'ulah*, 232 ff., esp. 250 f. Ibn Shemūel, following L. Ginzberg's major line of interpretation, refutes the late dating of the work by S. Krauss (in "Un nouveau texte pour l'histoire judeo-byzantine," *REJ*, LXXXVII [1929], 1 ff.). See, however, Starr, in *Romania*, 25 f., who, similar to Krauss, considers the author of the apocalypse a survivor of the fall of Constantinople in 1204, and the harmonizing position taken by Baron, *Social and Rel. History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), III, 315, note 6, and 317, note 12.

³³ The fanatical excesses of Lecapenus against Jews, Armenians and Muslim captives (for the last two, see Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus*, 115, and S. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge*, 62, respectively), had been initiated about the year 930. Al-Mas'ūdī began writing his book in 332 A.H. (943 C.E.), i.e., close to the end of Lecapenus' reign. He completed it four years later. Cf. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, I, 145; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, I, 327; Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 204. Ẕirḳisānī's commentary was completed in 938. Cf. L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 44.

Ḳirḳisānī must have acquired a first-hand knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the Jewish-dominated state.³⁴

With this background in mind, Ḳirḳisānī's dispassionate reference to "some commentators" who "are of the opinion that this verse (i.e., Gen. 9:27) alludes to the Khazars who accepted Judaism" can hardly be considered enthusiastic. Comparing it with his much more elaborate exposition of a different opinion held by the "majority of commentators," and yet of another one advanced by "other commentators," clearly manifests the *indifference* with which Ḳirḳisānī viewed the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism.

Coupled with that early tenth-century attitude of indifference was the evident *ignorance* of some of Karaism's keenest minds in that period concerning basic data about Khazaria. A sample of such lack of elementary information can be found in the bizarre concept expounded by the greatest Karaite lexicographer of the tenth century, David ben Abraham al-Fāsi, according to which all *European* nations were grouped under the heading of "Khazars."³⁵

It is only fair to add that this Karaite indifference (or ignorance) with regard to the Khazars was partly similar to that prevailing among *early* Rabbanite scholars, as evidenced by the paucity of references to Khazaria in contemporaneous Jewish literature. Such an attitude was probably prompted by a realistic appraisal of the true motives of Khazar conversion. Both Rabbanite and Karaite observers, *contemporary* with Jewish Khazaria, could not have been unaware of the motives of political and economic expedience which lay behind the superficial affiliation of Khazar rulers with Judaism.

³⁴ Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 42; Landau, *Zion*, VIII (1942-43), 96.

³⁵ Cf. his *Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz* (ed. S. Skoss), I, 159, lines 100-101; II, 216, variant to line 51; and 490, lines 29-30 (on *yaft elohim le-yefeth*). Pinsker reported that al-Fāsi's interpretations were excerpted by the eleventh-century Karaite commentator, 'Alī ben Suleimān. Cf. *Likḳūṭē*, 200 f. (on *yaft*), and, especially, 208 (equating *Ashkenaz* with *al-Khazar*). Cf. also the quotations from both authors as given by Harkavy in *Hammaggid*, XXI, No. 39 (1877), 357, §§ 3-4. While Pinsker and Harkavy cite the lexical entry deduced by 'Alī from Jer. 51:27 (*Minni we-Ashkenaz*), no parallel equation of *Ashkenaz* with Khazaria is to be found where it should be expected most—in Skoss' edition of *The Arabic Commentary of 'Alī ben Suleimān on the Book of Genesis*. There is a lacuna in the MS underlying the printed edition. It extends from Gen. 9:6 to 10:19, thus making inaccessible Gen. 9:27 (*yaft*) and 10:3 (*Ashkenaz*). Cf. further S. Krauss, "The Names *Ashkenaz* and *Sefarad*" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, III (1931-32), esp. 426-28, and "Die hebräischen Benennungen der modernen Völker," *Jewish Studies in Memory of G. A. Kohut*, 387 ff.

Nevertheless, in the context of Karaite missionary activity, which reached its peak precisely in the early tenth century, the attitude of Ẕirki-sānī, who was in a position to know and who surely would have welcomed the spread of Karaite doctrine, is more than eloquent. It indicates an implicit acknowledgement of the non-Karaite status of tenth-century Khazaria.

KHAZARIA IN KARAITE LITERATURE:
THE STORY OF CONTEMPT

A hundred years had passed. Jewish Khazaria, now a matter of history, had become woven into the fabric of legend. Only then did the tenth-century attitude of scholarly indifference yield to popular idealization. This change of heart led to two extreme and mutually opposed positions.

Rabbanite literature seized upon the story of Khazar conversion as a prize of great worth. It was then that the literary fiction, containing an alleged exchange of letters between Ḥisday ibn Shaprūt and King Joseph of Khazaria, first began to circulate among Jewish readers.³⁶ With the increase of interest in Khazar history, Rabbanite partisans gradually became aware of the propaganda value inherent in Khazaria's Jewishness. Hence, the twelfth-century Spanish Rabbanite exposition of philosophy of history, Yehūdah Hallevī's *Kitāb al-Khazari*, readily employed the literary form of a religious debate in the Khazar court; hence also the obvious propaganda slant in the above-cited account by Hallevī's younger compatriot, Abraham ibn Daūd.

On the other hand, confronted by Rabbanite propaganda, some Karaites went to the other extreme, relinquishing all positive interest in Khazaria. True, they themselves did not completely escape the popular appeal of this unusual episode in Jewish history and could

³⁶ The earliest mention of the "Khazar Correspondence" is to be found in Yehūdah al-Barṣelonī's *Sefer ha-'Ittim*, composed about 1100 c.e. Cf. S. Assaf, in *Jeschurun*, XI (1924), 113 ff. [= *Meḳōroth u-Meḳkarim*, I, 91 ff.]. Cf. also *Zion*, VII (1941-42), 48 ff. [= *Meḳōroth*, I, 96 ff.], for Assaf's answer to the unfounded criticism of H. Grégoire in "Le 'Glozel' Khazare," *Byzantion*, XII (1937), 225 ff. Significantly, already al-Barṣelonī was dubious over the authenticity of the "Correspondence."

In my labelling the Ḥisday-Joseph exchange a "literary fiction," I followed Poliak's incisive scrutiny in *Kazzariyya* and in his earlier study on the "Adoption of Judaism by the Khazars," *Zion*, VI (1941-41), 106-12, 160-80. It seems to me that in the same category belong also the first two documents of the "diplomatic correspondence" of Ḥisday ibn Shaprūt, published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 21 ff. They are purported to contain fragments of Hebrew (!) letters addressed by Ḥisday to the Byzantine emperor, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, and to his wife, Helena.

Cf. also Halpern's sober evaluation of "References to the Khazars and Tribes Contained in Ibn Shaprūt's Letter to the King of the Khazars," *Zion*, XV/III (1953), 80 ff.

not help pondering over the proud state of freedom enjoyed by the Khazar nation, as contrasted to Jewry's plight in Dispersion.

However, they all are from one country [exclaims the Byzantine Jacob ben Reuben in the late eleventh or early twelfth century, no doubt quoting some older source], and, in addition to all that, they did not carry the yoke of exile. For, indeed, they are mighty; theirs is kingship and rule; and they pay no tribute to Gentile nations.³⁷

This genuine admiration notwithstanding, the commentators preferred to point with contempt to the Khazars as aliens or even as sons of doubtful lineage. Commenting on the Book of Ezekiel, the same Byzantine Karaite compiler had this to say:

"And it shall come to pass that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth [there shall ye give him his inheritance]" (Ez. 47: 23). Now, [the prophet] Zechariah has already said (Zech. 9: 6), "And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod," alluding to the Khazars who shall enter the Jewish fold in the Diaspora.

True, the printed Hebrew text, as we have it, does not mention *Khazars* in this connection. The last line in the above-quoted paragraph reads instead, "Alluding to the *strangers* who shall enter the Jewish fold, etc."³⁸ Harkavy has shown, however, on the basis of the manuscript underlying the printed edition of Jacob ben Reuben's work, that the text was "emended" by Firkowicz when the latter was in charge of publications at the Karaite printing press in Gozlow. Since there are no vowels in Hebrew, the emendation of *kazarim*, i.e., Khazars, to *zarim*, meaning "strangers," involves only the dropping of one single consonant. Such a "correction," performed with no difficulty at all, was, of course, in line with the deliberate policy of nineteenth-century Karaite leadership in Russia to stress Khazar-Karaite kinship and the ethnic independence of the sect from talmudic Judaism. Surely, equating Khazars with bastards could hardly be considered a welcome contribution to the advancement of such policy.³⁹

ACCUSATION OF BASTARDY

Now, it is clear beyond any doubt that Jacob ben Reuben, the Byzantine compiler of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, cannot be credited with the original idea of

³⁷ Cf. Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher* on the Book of Ezekiel, 12a: ואולם הם כולם מארץ אחת ועם כל זה לא נשאו עול הגלות כי הם גבורים ובעלי מלכות ושררות ולא יתנו מארץ אחת מארץ אחרת Harkavy's tentative emendation מס לעכו"ם (cf. *Hammaggid*, XXI, No. 39 [1877], 357) has some merit but is not vitally necessary. His interpretation of the passage (*MGWJ*, XXXI [1882], 172) as a *derogatory* rather than commendatory stress of the difference between the "non-Jewish" position of the Khazars and the hapless status of the "true" Jews in the world, is far-fetched.

³⁸ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Ezekiel, 12a: ובכר אמר זכריה וישב ממור באשדוד ירמיו אל הזרים: אשר יבואו בית ה' בגלות.

³⁹ Cf. Harkavy, *Altjüdische Denkmäler aus der Krim*, 286; *idem*, "Karäische Deutung

ascribing bastardy to the Khazars. His commentary is a chaotic jumble of unskillfully abridged excerpts from various works, uncritically compiled and often arranged in a manner which caused one line to contradict another. The case now under consideration is itself a typical example of such procedure.

Thus, the author refers to the Khazars on the basis of a verse in the Book of Zechariah when commenting on a verse from the Book of Ezekiel. This alone would be quite in keeping with the usual method of exegetical literature. It seems, however, that when working on the Book of Zechariah proper, Jacob was utilizing a different commentary. Consequently, on reaching in Zechariah the verse which he interpreted earlier (in his Commentary on Ezekiel) as referring to the Khazars, he offered a different interpretation altogether. Furthermore, a consultation of the hitherto unpublished Pentateuch section of Jacob's *Sefer ha-'Osher* will reveal immediately that the compiler again used quite a different set of commentaries for interpreting Deuteronomy, where the word *mamzer*, i.e., bastard, also occurs (Det. 23:2-3). In the latter case no reference is made to the Khazars at all, although the opinion of some commentators is mentioned that *mamzer* was the name of a *certain nation*. The suggestion of other exegetes that *mamzer* denotes all (!) Gentiles who converted to Judaism is categorically rejected.⁴⁰

In brief: Equating the Khazars with bastards was no individual whim of a Jacob ben Reuben. Rather, it was a widespread, though not necessarily dominant, sentiment among several Karaite scholars both in the Arabic-speaking countries and in Byzantium. Accordingly, it merits also the attention of the student of history as a guide to the concept of Khazaria and the Khazars which apparently was popular among Byzantine and non-Byzantine Karaites of the eleventh century. Indeed, also an Arabic fragment of an eleventh-century (?) Karaite commentary

des Wortes "ממזר," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 170 ff.; *idem*, *Hammaggid*, XXI, No. 39 (1877), 357. See also P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien (Nachtrag)," *MGWJ*, XXV (1876), 512 f.

⁴⁰ The following is the Deuteronomy passage from Jacob's *Sefer ha-'Osher*, according to a photostatic copy of the Leiden MS Warner No. 8 (Cod. Or. 4746), 93a-b: לא יבוא... לא יתחבר לא במקום החפלה ולא השמחה כמו חופה ומילה והם גוים בופרים ונתיהרו. דיא בקהל ה' שלא יקרו מבנות ישראל... לא יבוא ממזר הוא הידוע מאמו ולא ידוע מאביו... ובל מי שיוולד מן ערות אסורות גם הוא יקרא ממזר אבל ישראל נקרא ממזר מפני שנתגרשו מנחלת דיא והנולד מן הנדה איך [צ"ל: אין] הוא ממזר בי אשתו כשרה. דיא (this, incidentally, is the traditional Rabbanite interpretation of Zech. 9:6); דיא (this, incidentally, is the traditional Rabbanite interpretation of Zech. 9:6) היא משפחה מהגוים קרואה ממזר. והיו יודעים אותה ישראל שני' וישב ממזר (here another interpretation of Zech. 9:6 is cited, which concurs with the views quoted below, 74, note 44); דיא הם כל הגוים המהידיים ולא בן הוא. דיא הם שאינם מזרע אברהם.

on Deuteronomy boldly distinguishes (in connection with the above-cited Deut. 23:2-3) between two categories of converts to Judaism. Only those foreign groups which joined the fold before Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem were entitled to full-fledged membership in the Jewish nation. The status of those who embraced Judaism while the Jews were already dispersed was doubtful; hence, till the end of days they are to be treated on a par with bastards, such as Moabites and Amonites. Invoking Zechariah's reference to the "bastard who shall dwell in Ashdod" and not be admitted into the community of Israel, the Arabic-writing Karaite, too, states specifically:

And it stands to reason that these are the Khazars who entered Jewish faith in Exile.⁴¹

To be sure, relegating foes and rival nations to the rank of bastards or proclaiming them sons of incestuous unions was a universal pastime of "patriotic" chroniclers all through antiquity and the Middle Ages. The genealogical tables of the Book of Genesis were easily adaptable to the needs and sentiments of later times, and no difficulty was encountered in identifying biblical villains with medieval tribes across the border. Indeed, contemporary with the Byzantine Karaite Jacob ben Reuben, the anonymous Slav author of the so-called *Chronicle of Nestor* busied himself in a somewhat similar way with the description of Russia's southern neighbors. Wasting no love on the Khazars (or the Khwalisses, as he calls them), the Volga Bolghars, the Polovtzi, and the like, he haughtily declares:

⁴¹ Cf. Harkavy, "Karäische Deutung des Wortes ממזר," *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882), 171; *idem*, "Rav Saadyah Gaon on the Khazars" (Hebrew), *Semitic Studies in Memory of A. Kohut*, 246 f.: ונביין אן הדא שרט אלמאם קבל אן גא נבוכדנצר ואגלא אלמאם מן בלדהם סאכחלט בעצהם בבפעץ פיגב אן יבוון חכם אלמגהול מחל חכם אלממזר ומואבי ועמוני אלי אן יגי מן יפצל אלגרים פתבין משפחות הגוים פתרגע תאלהם אלי מחל מא כאנת. וקאל וישב ממזר באשדוד פדל ולך עלי אן ישראל יפרדון להם אשדוד ואעמאלהא יסכנון פיהם. ויקרב אנהם אלבזר אללידין דכלר פי דין ישראל פי אלגלות. ואמא אללידי כאנו עלי דין ישראל קבל אלגלות פקד געל אללה עז וגל להם אן יסכנון בין ישראל בקולה (ייחזי מ'ז כג) ויהיה בשבט אשר גר הגר אתו שם תתנו בחלחלו.

Harkavy speculated that the author of the Arabic commentary was either Yefeth ben 'Ali (end of the tenth century) or Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah (mid-eleventh century). His suggestion, however, that here we have the original text excerpted later by the Byzantine Jacob ben Reuben, seems extremely doubtful. Cf. our quotation from Jacob's Commentary on Deuteronomy (note 40). All that connects the two authors is their common attitude to Khazaria. No linguistic affinities, such as are manifest whenever Jacob ben Reuben's Hebrew excerpts are compared with the Arabic original, can be detected in the present case. Similarity of view alone (a partial similarity at that) cannot be taken as automatic proof of textual indebtedness. It does, however, show the extent of popularity which the anti-Khazar school of thought enjoyed in the Karaite camp. For a sample of literal indebtedness by Jacob cf. below, 77, note 48.

Even if this was, indeed, the case, the Karaites' unparalleled outspokenness with regard to the "alienage" of Khazaria demands an explanation. The truth of the matter is that none of the Rabbanite commentaries which contained the aforementioned interpretation identified the "alien nation" specifically with the people of Khazaria. To the extent that they advanced such an interpretation at all—possibly echoing Karaite exegesis—they mentioned it as merely one of the possible modes of exposition of the scriptural verse and used it only as a general appellation for *any* foreign people. If they had a definitive case in mind, they failed to name it explicitly.

The Karaites alone were deliberately specific on this point. Bent on stressing Khazar strangeness and incompatibility with what the term "Israel" stood for, they read into the biblical statement a clear-cut decree of segregation from the "alien Khazars" who "entered the Jewish fold in the Diaspora." This sense of incompatibility may have been stirred up or, at least, strengthened by the influx of Khazar *Rabbanite* refugees to Byzantium and Spain. The face-to-face meeting with the daily practices of *living* Khazars must have had a sobering effect on whatever remained of the Karaite attachment to the Khazar *legend*. It bared for all to see the inevitable differences between the customs imported by the newcomers and those prevailing among the native Karaite population.⁴⁵

We are now in a position to sum up the *negative* part of the Khazar record in Karaite literature. Whether this record be interpreted as a story of indifference and ignorance, or as demonstration of outright contempt, or, finally, as a mere realization of incompatibility, it cannot

unknown, was unfamiliar with that interpretation. (Concerning the influence of Karaite exegesis on Abraham ibn Ezra, see my "Elijah Bashyachi" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz*, XXV [1955-56], 60 ff., 194 ff., and the literature cited there.)

⁴⁵ It should be of interest, as an example of the process characteristic to Karaism in general, to follow up here the story of the mutual influence of Karaite and Spanish Rabbanite commentators with reference to the interpretation of the biblical term *mamzer*.

While Spanish Rabbanites may have followed the *early* Karaite commentators in some of their interpretations of *mamzer*, the reverse is true with regard to *later* Karaite exegetes. As it so often happened in the period of Karaite decline, in this case, also, the influence of Ibn Ezra, the Rabbanite, on later Karaite commentators in Byzantium was far more decisive than that of the early Byzantine Karaite eclectics. It is from Ibn Ezra (note 44), and not from *Sefer ha-Osher* (note 40), that the information on the existence of an interpretation referring *mamzer* to an alien nation passed into the commentaries of the "two [Karaite] Aarons," i.e., Aaron ben Joseph, of the late thirteenth century, and Aaron ben Elijah, of the fourteenth century. Cf. the former's *Mibhar* and the latter's *Kether Torah*, *ad loc.*

be shrugged off by the impartial observer when speculating on the possible links of early Byzantine Karaism with Jewish Khazaria.

But there is a *positive* aspect to the record also. It should by no means be assumed that the position taken by Jacob ben Reuben and his source (or sources) was necessarily representative of *all* Byzantine Karaite scholarship. At the very time that *Sefer ha-'Osher* was being compiled, other Karaite commentaries were circulating in the Empire. These interpreted *mamzer* differently, though, again, contrary to the accepted Rabbanite exegesis.⁴⁶

Indeed, other Karaite commentaries may have been more favorably inclined toward Khazaria, depending on the date of their composition. Especially the tenth-century disintegration of the Muslim East generated messianic expectations which could not fail to reverberate in Jewish (including Karaite) literature. With the rising tide of anti-Muslim feelings wishful allusions were read into the Bible, predicting an attack on "Babylonia," i.e., on the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. The attack was to come "from beyond Bāb al-Abwāb," meaning Derbend, the Caspian "Gate of Gates," a Muslim stronghold which held the Khazars in check. Hence, for a time, the apocalyptic northern invader was identified with the Khazars.

KHAZARIA IN KARAITE LITERATURE: THE MESSIANIC STORY

There seem to have been three distinctive stages in the story of Karaite messianic excitement connected with the Khazars in the tenth century.

In this connection it may not be superfluous to correct a misstatement which occurred in J. Starr's *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 217. Having misunderstood Harkavy's reference to the two last-mentioned Karaite commentators in Byzantium, Starr counted three (!) Byzantine Karaite scholars who allegedly interpreted the word *mamzer* as pertaining to the Khazars. This is incorrect. Of the *Byzantine* Karaites, Jacob ben Reuben alone is known to have made a specific reference to the Khazars in connection with the aforementioned term. The other source (introduced by Harkavy) is Arabic, hence was not composed in the Empire. If, as is very likely, there were other Byzantine works containing a similar reference, they have yet to be brought to light.

At any rate, the "two Aarons," whom Starr counted along with Jacob ben Reuben, were already unaware of the eleventh-century view. Active after three generations or more of Karaite decline, they were probably unfamiliar with the full text of *Sefer ha-'Osher*. Having learnt from Ibn Ezra of the possibility of equating *mamzer* with a name of a nation, they followed their mentor in listing and rejecting this view. However, similar to Ibn Ezra, they neither referred it specifically to the Khazars nor accepted it in the first place as a plausible interpretation.

⁴⁶ Thus, Tobias ben Eliezer, the Rabbanite homilist of Castoria, vehemently opposed the "commentator of the Karaites" (*hap-pother shel kara'in*) who referred the term *mamzer* to a man suffering from a sexual defect. Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Deuteronomy (ed. Padwa), 77 [39a]. Cf. also S. Buber's introduction to his edition of *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Genesis-Exodus, 45 [23a].

These stages can well be traced in the allusions to contemporary events, scattered through the Arabic commentaries of the late tenth-century Palestinian Karaite, Yefeth ben 'Alī.

The *early* comments reflect the rising hopes of messianic dreamers, spurred on probably by the nationalist-Jewish policy of the Khazar kingdom. Reading into the anti-Chaldean prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 48:14) events and sentiments of the tenth century, an Arabic-writing exegete referred the phrase, "He whom the Lord loveth," to the Khazars.⁴⁷ Harkavy, who published the fragment, thought it was composed by Saadyah Gaon or by the ninth-century Karaite Benjamin an-Nahāwendī. Leaving the judgment on the first alternative to Saadyanic students, it should be noted here that Benjamin's authorship of the passage seems in any case extremely unlikely. This conclusion is reached both from the chronological and factual context as well as in view of Benjamin's practice of composing his works, as a rule, in Hebrew. It seems quite plausible, however, to attribute the text to the school of the aforementioned Yefeth ben 'Alī the Karaite.

Indeed, the hitherto unpublished Isaiah section of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, the oft-quoted Byzantine Karaite compilation by Jacob ben Reuben which is well known for its indebtedness to Hebrew epitomes of Yefeth's Arabic works, has preserved an abridgment of the said pro-Khazar passage.⁴⁸ True, the eleventh- or twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite exegete was obviously dissatisfied with Yefeth's message which was incomprehensible to a generation chronologically and geographically removed from the scene of the events. He, therefore, borrowed from another commentator the additional explanation that "he whom the Lord loveth" is none else but the Messiah himself.⁴⁹

Another messianic reference to the general area of Khazaria is to be found in Yefeth's Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah (on Jer. 50:21, 25).⁵⁰ This reference also was incorporated into the (printed) version of

⁴⁷ Cf. *Hammagid*, XXI, No. 39 (1877), 357: קולה ה' אהבו. יקאל עלי אלכור אלדי יגו. ריכרבו בבל. פסמאה אהוב לה' וכ'.

⁴⁸ Cf. Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 158a: יי אהבו. יאמי כי הם כורים אשר יחריבו לבבל שהם: אהובי יי. Note the direct, *literal* indebtedness of Jacob to the Yefeth text, as contrasted with the mere similarity of views in the passages adduced above, 72 f., notes 40-41. Jacob's standard procedure was to copy verbatim a line or two from a Hebrew translation of Yefeth's book (available in Byzantium) and simply leave out the rest of the passage. It is this unmistakable trait in Jacob's technique that makes the suggestion of Harkavy, discussed in note 41, unacceptable. See more on the subject in Chapter IV, below, esp. note 105.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: ד"א יי אהבו. למשיח. כי הוא יחריב לבבל.

⁵⁰ Reproduced by Harkavy, *Voskhod*, I (1882), 239 ff. Cf. A.N. Poliak, *Kazzartyya*, 295.

Sefer ha-'Osher.⁵¹ As a matter of fact, in this passage mention is made of the "king of *Israel*" and not the king of the *Khazars*; but the simultaneous reference to Bāb al-Abwāb makes it plain that the judaized Khazar ruler is meant.⁵² However, the atmosphere in the text at hand is markedly different from that permeating the Isaiah passage cited earlier. It evidently reflects *later* changes in the political make-up of the area: the great expectations have given way to a realistic awareness that Arab-held Bāb al-Abwāb was too well fortified, "so that the King of Israel [i.e., of the *Khazars*] could not pass."

The *third* stage in Yefeth's anti-Islamic predictions is that reflected in the commentary composed last by this great Karaite exegete. It is his Commentary on the Book of Daniel from which we shall be copiously quoting in the next chapter and which faithfully mirrors the revolutionary changes in the Middle East in the latter part of the tenth century: the ascendancy of Byzantium and the Carmathian terror. A two-pronged attack on Islām is envisaged. The "king of the North," hailing from "beyond Bāb al-Abwāb," will join forces with the apocalyptic "king of the South," i.e., with the renascent military might of the Byzantine Empire. But this time the *Khazars* are no longer even hinted at. It is the Carmathians who are expected to come "whirling" from the "North." Jewish *Khazaria* had ceased by now to constitute a serious factor in the political picture of the period; indeed, it possibly was no longer Jewish.⁵³

This passage, too, has found its way into Jacob ben Reuben's compilation, and here again, similar to the Isaiah text quoted first, Yefeth's comments were hardly compatible with the situation and the problems facing the generation of Jacob. The confused and garbled form in which the allusions of Yefeth to the Carmathians were presented in the Byzantine Hebrew version proves that Byzantine Karaism of the late eleventh century found all these allusions simply unintelligible.⁵⁴

LESSON OF KARAITE LITERATURE

To sum up: The messianic references to *Khazaria*, present in the tenth-century creations of Palestinian Karaites and faintly reechoed in later Byzantine recensions, do not alter the picture reconstructed earlier in

⁵¹ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Jeremiah, 5a.

⁵² The text actually reads *Bāb al-Bāb*, which is an obvious corruption of *Bāb al-Abwāb*.

⁵³ Cf. *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Jepheth ibn 'Ali the Karaite* (ed. D. S. Margoliouth), 133, lines 8 ff.; Eng. tr., 71.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Daniel, 19c-d.

this chapter. *So far as clues to the brand of Khazaria's Jewishness are concerned, the positive pro-Khazar record of tenth-century Palestinian messianic enthusiasm does not differ essentially from the negative record of indifference or contempt on the part of the sectaries in Byzantium and elsewhere. In neither of these records can an allusion to an allegedly Karaite persuasion of the Khazar people be detected.* Not even at the peak of messianic excitement was an attempt made to equate the expected Khazar saviors with the forces of Karaism. Such a situation would not only be inconceivable if there were any truth to the allegation of the Khazars' affiliation with the Karaite synagogue, but it actually stands in glaring contrast to the historic (and psychologically well understandable) alliance of sectarianism and messianism in the early centuries of Jewish experience under Islām.⁵⁵

Hence, the relevant lesson which evolves from a survey of the early Karaite literature with reference to Khazaria is this: tenth- and eleventh-century Karaism in the East, and even more so in Byzantium, was completely unaware of any special Karaite affinity with Khazaria. Even when fired by messianic enthusiasm, a Karaite's interest in the Khazars was no greater than that of any other messianic dreamer in Jewry of that time.

Against this background, the *derogatory* remarks of *some* Karaite authors regarding the Khazars—remarks whose defamatory nature has no peer in Rabbanite literature—gain even more in significance. The silence of the many and the negative attitude of the few suffice to shelve automatically the (second) theory listed above, which traced the very origins of Byzantine Karaism to an eleventh-century influx of immigrants to Byzantium from an allegedly Karaite Khazaria.

THE "MISSIONARY" THEORY

A third theory which has achieved widespread currency warrants our special attention. This theory looms large in both old and current conceptions of Karaite history and is, more often than not, implicit in the standard presentations even when not spelt out in so many words.⁵⁶ It links the spread of Karaism in Egypt and Byzantium (and, for a while, in Spain) with an intensive missionary activity which is said to have radiated from the Palestinian stronghold of the sect during the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Cf. briefly in our Introduction, above, 10 f.

⁵⁶ E.g., J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 3, 287.

⁵⁷ Cf. P. F. Frankl, in *Ersch und Gruber Enz.*, Section Two, XXXIII, 20a: "Durch den Eifer und Rührigkeit der kāräischen Propagandisten des 10. und 11. Jahrh., war der

Now, it is undeniable that as a militant minority Karaism did pursue forceful propaganda schemes when and wherever possible. Although we are in possession of no actual data about Palestinian missionaries preaching Karaite doctrine in Byzantium, such a phenomenon was perfectly possible and might have been effective in certain cases.⁵⁸ Occasionally, too, Karaite merchants from Syria might have visited Byzantine cities and fairs along with Rabbanite and Syrian fellow merchants.⁵⁹ At the same time, pilgrims coming from the Empire might have been stirred by the piety and zeal of the Karaite "Mourners of Zion" whom they would meet in the Holy City. One can readily imagine them remaining for a longer period of indoctrination, then returning home with a spark of that fire kindled in Jerusalem, their minds no longer receptive to accepted tenets of Rabbanite tradition.⁶⁰

FAILURE OF KARAITE MISSION

It seems, however, that no large groups could any longer be won over to the Karaite side from Rabbanite ranks in the later tenth and the eleventh centuries. The dynamic attack of Saadyah Gaon and the

Karaismus von Palästina und seinen Nachbarländern aus nach Nordafrika und Spanien wie nach Griechenland vorgedrungen." And again, *ibid.*, 22b: "Im 10. und 11. Jahrh. wird vom Heiligen Lande aus eifrig nach allen Richtungen hin Propaganda getrieben, Aegypten und Byzanz werden für Jahrhunderte Stammsitze der Karäer, Spanien nur vorübergehend." See also Pinsker on the subject of Karaite propaganda, *Liḳḳūtē Qadmoniyyoth*, passim.

⁵⁸ Thus, the eleventh-century Karaite philosopher, Joseph al-Baṣīr of Jerusalem (see on him below, 81, note 65), tells us of his travels "to cities and to far lands." If, as Pinsker suggests, the Greek words scattered in his works stem from al-Baṣīr himself, there is room for assuming that he visited also Byzantium in quest of knowledge and as part of the Karaite propaganda effort. Cf. *Liḳḳūtē Qadmoniyyoth*, App., Note XIV, 195. However, no clear evidence to this effect is available. The consensus of scholarly opinion after Pinsker credits the Byzantine Tobias ben Moses with the Greek glosses and the Hebrew translation of al-Baṣīr's works.

⁵⁹ On Syrian merchants in Constantinople, cf. the Byzantine *Book of the Prefect*, Section V, §§ 2, 5; Eng. tr. by A. E. R. Boak in "Notes and Documents," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, I (1928-29), 606 f. Cf. further Ch. M. Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance sous la dynastie de Macedoine*, 49; R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 30 f.

⁶⁰ Cf., for instance, the Arabic Genizah letter published by S. Assaf and reprinted in his *Mekōroth u-Meḳkarim*, I, 109 f. See also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 3. For a partial criticism of the well-known account by Ibn Daūd (*Seder haḳ-Qabbalah*, in Neubauer's *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 79) of the rise of Spanish Karaism following the visit in Jerusalem of the Castilian Ibn at-Tarās, see my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 189 ff. See also above, 8, and 34.

effective performance of his successors alerted Rabbanite communities and individuals to the danger of Karaite penetration.⁶¹

Of course, Saadyah was not the first to defend Rabbinism against the encroachments of the dissenters.⁶² Nor did Saadyah so uncompromisingly fight Karaism and ultimately save Judaism, as the commonly accepted myth would have it.⁶³ Nevertheless, it goes without saying that this gaon laid down the foundations for a consistent and systematic refutation of non-normative doctrine, which explains partly the vehement antagonism vis-à-vis his very name by the Karaite sect. This antagonism continued unabated for many centuries after Saadyah's death.⁶⁴

An indication of the ever-growing difficulties encountered by dissident propaganda can be detected in the stand of tenth- and eleventh-century Karaite leaders against the stringency of the sectarian marriage law. Such men as al-Baṣīr⁶⁵ and his pupils, Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah of Jeru-

⁶¹ Cf. S. Poznański, "The Anti-Karaite Writings of Saadiah Gaon," *JQR* (O.S.), X (1897-98), 238 ff.; *idem*, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*; H. Malter, *Life and Works of Saadia Gaon*.

⁶² Cf. L. Ginzberg's *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 504 ff., and B. M. Lewin's "Genizah Remnants" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, II (1930-31), 383 ff., on the early ninth-century Rabbanite protagonist Pirkoi ben Baboi. See also, in general, concerning the pre-Saadyan and post-Saadyan fight of the geonim against Karaism, in A. Marmorstein's "Spuren karäischen Einflusses in der gaonäischen Halacha," *Festschrift A. Schwarz*, 455 ff.

⁶³ Of the recent presentations of Saadyah as the great fighter of the Rabbanite cause who was motivated in all his undertakings by a realization of Karaite danger to Judaism, cf., for instance, A. S. Yahuda, "R. Saadyah Gaon and the Karaite Danger in the Light of the Arab Environment" (Hebrew), reprinted from *Biṣṣaron*, 1943, in his *'Eber wa-'Arab*, 150-64; P. R. Weis, "The Anti-Karaite Tendency of R. Saadya Gaon's Arabic Version of the Pentateuch", in E. I. J. Rosenthal (ed.), *Saadya Studies*, 227-44; or M. Zucker's discussion of "Saadyah's Role in the Controversy over *mim-Moḥorath hash-Shabbath*," *PAAJR*, XX (1951), Hebrew Section, 1-26, and other essays. Cf., however, Professor Baron's sober evaluation of "Saadia's Communal Activities," in *Saadia Anniversary Volume of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 17 ff., especially note 19; and, most recently, his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 278 f. and 414 f.

⁶⁴ My own interpretation of *one* of the motives behind the Saadyan assault has been briefly expounded in the Introduction to the present study, 23 f.

⁶⁵ See regarding him Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah*, 46 ff.; *idem*, "The Beginnings of Karaite Settlement in Jerusalem" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem* (ed. Luncz), X (1913), 102 ff. Also see *Likkūṭē Qadmoniyoth*, esp. App., Note XIV, 192 ff., and, of course, P. F. Frankl's masterly studies, such as "Die Stellung Joseph al-Baṣīrs in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie," *MGWJ*, XX (1871), 114 ff., 150 ff.; "Zur karäischen Bibliographie," *MGWJ*, XXI (1872), 207 ff., 274 ff.; *Ein mu'tazilitischer Kalām aus dem 10. Jahrhundert*; and *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*. Likewise, cf. M. Schreiner, *Der Kalām in der jüdischen Literatur*; I. Husik, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, 48 ff.; the general Hebrew summary in *Oṣar*

salem and Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople,⁶⁶ strove successfully to liberalize *rikkūb*, i.e., the prevailing system of defining the degrees of kinship to which the biblical prohibition of incest was applicable. The *rikkūb* system, as dictated by early Karaite codes, extended the principle of consanguinity to so many grades of relationship however remote, labeling them as incestuous, that the possibility of marriage within the sect became increasingly difficult. Thus, the winning over of new members to the Karaite creed was a matter of social necessity no less than of religious zeal.⁶⁷

The energetic action of Karaite legislators of the eleventh century to open broader opportunities for endogamy to the by then static Karaite population should therefore not be viewed merely as a halakhic question. It is an important piece of sociological evidence. Indeed, it bears indirect proof of the fact that at the turn of the millennium the growth of Karaism could no longer—not even through marriage—count on an appreciable addition of membership from circles outside the sect.⁶⁸ The fact that some (unsuccessful) attempts in this direction were made a hundred years earlier shows that responsible and far-sighted leaders

Yisrael, V, 134 f.; and, most recently, my own discussion of "Ibn al-Hitī and the Chronology of Joseph al-Bašīr," *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1–2 (1957), 71–81.

⁶⁶ For data on Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdāh (= Abū'l-Faraj Furqan) see G. Margoliouth, "The Writings of Abū'l-Faraj Furqan ibn Asad," *JQR* (O.S.), XI (1898–99), 187 ff.; M. Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*, 91 ff.; M. Schreiner, *Studien über Jeschua ben Jehuda*; S. Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 48 ff.; J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 34 ff.; I. Husik, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, 55 ff.; and, briefly, I. Markon, *Enc. Judaica*, IX, 42 f., and L. Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 123 ff.

Regarding Tobias ben Moses see the literature cited above, 27, note 3 to Chapter I.

⁶⁷ On the *rikkūb* system and its evolution in Karaite legislation, see the excursus by Elijah Bashyachi in his *Addereth Eliyyahū* (ed. Odessa), Section 'Arayoth, Ch. V, 148c–149d. See also L. Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud*, 263 ff.; *Ošar Yisrael*, VIII, 143 ff.; and the most recent summary in English by Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 124 ff. There also a brief English selection is given from Yeshū'ah's major work on the Karaite law of incest. The inner Karaite struggle on the issue is described and documented in my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955–56), 54 ff., especially with regard to the differences between the two schools opposing the *rikkūb* system, that of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdāh and that of his teacher, Joseph al-Bašīr.

⁶⁸ This was already realized by P. F. Frankl, *Ersch und Gruber Enz.*, Section Two, XXXIII, 19b, when speaking of the dangers inherent in the *rikkūb* system: "Solange der Karaismus in seiner Propaganda fortschritt, mag dies [i.e., the danger of the *rikkūb*] kaum empfunden worden sein. Als aber der Karaismus durch das Aufwachen des rabbanitischen Geistes sich daran gewöhnen musste, nur den ererbten Stamm der Sekte als seinen festen, sichern Bestand anzusehen, zu dem nur sehr wenige von aussen herzukommen würden, mussten die Eheverbote beschränkt werden, und dies geschah mit grossem Erfolge durch die Meister des 11. Jahrh., durch Joseph Haroēh [al-Bašīr] und Jeschua."

recognized already in the tenth century the declining trend in the effectiveness of Karaite missionary activity.⁶⁹

It is not difficult to understand why the call for liberalization of the Karaite law of incest remained unanswered in the tenth-century climate of asceticism and religious revival. Even in the changed atmosphere of the eleventh century the forces of conservatism were still strongly opposed to the innovations of realistic leaders. Yeshū'ah's anti-*rikkūb* legislation which finally won the day was but a compromise between the more liberal stand of his teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr, and the old school.⁷⁰

However negligible, then, the *practical* results of the recognition of the social menace in the *rikkūb* system by tenth-century Karaite law-makers, the very existence of such recognition ought to be borne in mind when theorizing on the share of missionary propaganda in establishing Karaism on Byzantine soil.

THE HISTORIAN'S DILEMMA

On the other hand, it is also questionable whether Karaite propaganda was in a position to achieve at any earlier period such outstanding successes that it could boast of appreciable inroads into the non-Arabic-speaking Jewish community of Byzantium. The Palestinian and, to some extent, Syrian and Egyptian Karaite units were the only potential reservoirs for Karaite missionary expansion westwards.⁷¹ At the end of the ninth century, however, they were unprepared for a task of this kind, despite their consolidation and strength on the local level.

True, the ascendancy of Palestinian Karaism, concurrent with the independent rule of the Ṭūlūnids over Palestine in the years 878–905,

⁶⁹ Already the tenth-century Karaite scholar and Naṣī, David ben Bo'az, called for modification of the *rikkūb* law. This fact, later forgotten, was recorded by one of David's descendants, Solomon Naṣī, who himself wrote in 1204 a treatise on the Karaite law of incest. Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 140 ff., esp. note 20, and, earlier, Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 64. See also the statement of Moses Bashyachi, the sixteenth-century great-grandson of Elijah Bashyachi, in his *Maṭṭeh Elohim*, as excerpted by Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, 11 f.

⁷⁰ Cf. the correct evaluation of Yeshū'ah's solution of the *rikkūb* strife by the early sixteenth-century Karaite author, Moses Beghi of Constantinople, in Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1454 f.

⁷¹ For the direction of Karaite expansionism radiating from the Palestinian center of the movement, cf. the quotation from P. F. Frankl above, 79 f., note 57, (bearing, of course, in mind my reservations in regard to Frankl's crediting sectarian propaganda with *primary* responsibility for Karaism's expansion beyond the borders of Palestine). Cf. also the frequent references of the tenth-century Karaite missionary, Sahl ben

caused much trouble to the Palestinian geonim of the Ben Meir family.⁷² Nevertheless, Karaite strength in Palestine seems to have been limited at that time to a few key-communities, such as Jerusalem and Ramlah, and could hardly reach beyond Egypt and Syria, which were also governed by the Ṭūlūnids. Only from the middle of the tenth century on, did the Palestinian center and its Egyptian and Syrian branches possess the numerical and communal resources to reach outward.

Of course, individual Karaites may have come to Byzantium before that period. Yet, it seems obvious that the appearance of Karaites in the Empire in great numbers could not have preceded the mid-tenth-century flowering of Karaism in Palestine and in adjoining Muslim countries. By then, however, Rabbanite communities everywhere were, as already noted, on the alert against Karaite missionary penetration.⁷³

To be sure, our conclusions with regard to the limited success of Karaite propaganda, from the mid-tenth century on, are by no means incompatible with the fact that such propaganda was pursued also in later centuries. Karaite missionary literature would not cease to be produced and circulated, regardless of the number of people outside the fold who would care to read it. Keeping up missionary enthusiasm and spreading the consciousness of a missionary calling were, first and above all, matters of *inner necessity* to the struggling religious minority. They provided the group with a *raison d'être* and created a state of constructive tension between its membership and the outside world. We shall commit, however, a grave mistake in converting slogans intended for internal consumption into materials to be relied upon as alleged pointers to a movement's actual impact on its environment. There is no direct and measurable relationship between the pitch of the Karaites' missionary and polemical pronouncements and the statistical picture of their numerical gains.

Maṣliāḥ, to the fact that he has come from *Beith ham-Miqdash* (i.e., بیت المقدس = Jerusalem). See his oft-quoted epistle, in Pinsker's *Likḫūṭē*, App. III, 24 ff.; abridged Eng. version by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 111 ff. The particular place of Sahl's mission referred to in the above text is uncertain.

⁷² See on it Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimids*, I, 57 ff., and *Texts and Studies*, II, 6 ff. Some of the motives for intensive Karaite settlement and consolidation in Palestine at that time have been explained in the Introduction to the present study, 21 ff.

⁷³ Cf., for instance, the complaint of Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ against Rabbanite interference with his mission, in the aforementioned epistle, *Likḫūṭē*, App. III, 24 f. (*Karaite Anthology*, 111 f.): ואתה למה חרה לך בבראי ללמוד וללמד ולשבת עם אכירי ויקירי חכמי קהל ולהשיב: ואתה עם ה'...? ולא די לכם שלא תוכיחו וגם לא תשובו ולא תשיבו ער שיקשה בעיניכם דבר מוכיח

We are thus confronted with two elementary facts. On the one hand, Karaite origins in Byzantium must be dated not earlier than the latter half of the tenth century. On the other hand, Karaite expansion could not at that time have resulted from ideological conquest alone—a process intrinsically slow and one which was becoming particularly difficult. Yet, by the middle of the eleventh century the Byzantine movement already embraced a nation-wide chain of organized communities! Less than a hundred years later it boasted of a literature of high caliber and vied for the leadership of the Karaite world!

ORIGINS OF KARAISM IN BYZANTIUM

In view of this rapid increase and maturation, the unparalleled growth of Karaism in Byzantium must be ascribed mainly to *external* forces rather than to gradual internal diffusion. Such external forces may have assumed the form either of Karaite *immigration* into the Empire or of Byzantine *annexation* of territories which already contained an indigenous Karaite population. We shall, of course, not look for indications of a process of this sort as if it were exclusively a Karaite affair. In accord with the “basic premises” expounded at the outset of this study, we shall seek a general Jewish event or movement in which the Karaites were involved automatically, as a segment of Eastern Jewry, and which eventually brought about their integration within the Byzantine Empire.

Now that we have postulated a link between external developments and the appearance of Karaism *en force* in Byzantium, we may proceed to narrow down the suggested alternatives to one probable course.

It would be rather strange to expect a voluntary Jewish *immigration to Byzantium* from Syria and Palestine while the anti-Jewish policies of Basil I or of Romanus I Lecapenus were either in force or still fresh in the minds of the living generations concerned.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ A Jewish echo of the persecutions during the reign of Basil I (867–86) comes to us from the Byzantine possessions in Southern Italy. Cf. *Megillath Ahima'as*, ed. Klar, 20 ff.; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, I, Pt. 1, 58, § 479; Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael bag-Golah*, I, Pt. 1, 31 f. For further references and full discussion consult Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, Chapter I (“Persecution and Intolerance”), and the texts and notes appended thereto. On the forced baptism decreed by Romanus I Lecapenus (919–44) see the references above, 68, note 32 to the present chapter. For a Jerusalem echo of the baptizing effort of Lecapenus cf. the latter part of Chapter III. The whole problem of “Byzantine Eruptions” against the Jewish inhabitants of the Empire was recently subjected anew to a searching analysis in Professor Baron’s *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), III, 174 ff., esp. 179 ff. (on Basil) and 182 f. (on Romanus).

On the contrary: we are informed that an *emigration from* Byzantium was on its way as a result of Lecapenus' persecutions in the first half of the tenth century. This exodus must have assumed considerable proportions indeed, since it has been recorded by a non-Jewish observer.⁷⁵

We are left, then, with only one logical conclusion. The appearance of Karaite communities in the Empire must be linked to external events of the other nature suggested above, i.e., to Byzantine *annexation* of new areas in which a native Karaite population was already established. Following such annexation, a further Karaite *immigration inland*, into the western regions of the Empire, could also be postulated. It is this theory that we intend to develop in the succeeding pages.

⁷⁵ Cf. above, 68, note 32.

CHAPTER III
THE SETTLEMENT

THE SECOND half of the tenth century witnessed a continuous triumph of Byzantine arms which had no analogy since the days of Justinian the Great. It marked a novel approach, novel aims and novel tactics on the part of the rejuvenated military leadership of the Empire. For centuries there had been a push-and-pull pattern of razzias and retreats on the fluctuating borderline between the Caliphate and the Christian State, with no decisive results. With the tenth-century Byzantine successes a new realization impressed itself on the mind of the turbulent East: the Byzantines have this time come here to stay.¹

ON THE BYZANTINE-MUSLIM BORDER

It would take us too long to follow through the ceaseless, year-by-year building-up of Byzantine might. The Byzantine expansion had already

¹ For a documentary history of the fluctuating Byzantine-Muslim border in the time covered by our discussion, see A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, and especially III (it being E. Honigmann's *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches*), Chapter III, "The Byzantine-Arab Frontier from 960 to 1071 A.D.," 93 ff.

Since the purpose of this chapter is to catch the *echoes of the Byzantine successes as they reverberated among the stricken populations of the East* (including the Karaite communities there), the *eastern* reports will obviously be of more relevance to our story. Thus, of the primary sources we shall refer mostly to the Arabic chronicle of Yahya of Antioch. Though written in the eleventh century, this record possesses the flavor of the locale in which the historical drama took place. Cf. J. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev (ed.), *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa'ïd d'Antioche Continuateur de Sa'ïd-ibn-Bitric* (Arabic text and French translation), *Patrologia Orientalis*, XVIII, No. 5, 705-833, and XXIII, No. 3, 349-520. (In future references the separate pagination of the off-print will be cited [7-312].)

Similarly, the *Syriac Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj Bar-Hebraeus*, edited by E. Wallis Budge (Volume I containing Budge's translation of the work into English, whence come our references), retains the eastern outlook on the tenth- and eleventh-century events. Though it is quite late in date of composition, it still mirrors the atmosphere reconstructed in the present chapter. Of the truly contemporary records, Muḳaddasī's *Description of Syria Including Palestine* (Eng. translation by Guy Le Strange) faithfully reflects the *anguish of the civilian population*.

A detailed year-by-year story of the great Byzantine offensive is given by G. Schlumberger in his monumental *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle—Nicéphore Phocas and L'Épopée byzantine*, I (the latter covering the period of John Tzimiskes and the early years of Basil II). On the new spirit of the era see C. Neumann, *Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor den Kreuzzügen*, 26; G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (2nd ed.), 232 ff.; Vasiliev, "The Struggle with the Saracens," *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, 144; *idem*, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (ed. 1952), 308; H. Gelzer, *Byzantinische Kulturgeschichte*, 23 f.; S. Runciman, *The*

begun with the exploits of Curcuas under Romanus Lecapenus² and culminated in the tremendous victories of Nicephor Phocas, John Tzimiskes and Basil II.³ The triumphal march of the three great soldier-emperors cleared the islands of Crete and Cyprus and their surrounding waters of nests of Muslim corsairs.⁴ The Byzantine banner was carried aloft through Cilicia and Syria, far beyond the Tigris and the Euphrates.⁵

This resurgence of Byzantine power loomed even more largely on the Near Eastern horizon if compared with the utter degeneration of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. There, a pitiful shadow of the Prophet's representative on earth was held in the grips of Buwayhid sultans,⁶ and Carmathian bands terrorized cities and roads, interfering with caravans of pilgrims and merchants.⁷ Not even the brave Ḥamdānid Sayf ad-Daula could

Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign, 146 ff., 242; Ch. Diehl, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 36 f.; Jenkins, *The Byz. Empire on the Eve of the Crusades*, 3 ff.

² Yaḥya, 32 ff.; Bar-Hebraeus, 161 ff.; Vasiliev, *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 143; *idem*, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 307; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 142 ff., 241 f.; L. Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance* [= *Le monde byzantin*, I], 169 ff.

³ Yaḥya, 69 ff.; Bar-Hebraeus, 164 ff.; Diehl, in *Byzantium* (ed. N. Baynes and H. Moss), 22; *idem*, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 77 ff.; *idem*, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 13 f., 36. Ostrogorsky (*Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 228 ff.) terms the whole period "the Era of Conquests." Cf. also the chapter "L'Expansion" in Bréhier's *Vie et mort de Byzance*, 179 ff., esp. the section devoted to "La grande offensive," 192 ff.

⁴ Yaḥya, 84, 96 f.; Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 32 ff. (devoted to Crete), 473 f. (on Cyprus); Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 229, 232 f.; Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, 187 ff.

⁵ For the campaigns of Nicephor Phocas in Asia Minor see Yaḥya, 86 ff.; Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 115 ff.; in Cilicia and Syria, *ibid.*, 154 ff. On campaigns by Tzimiskes as Domestikos, along with Nicephor as emperor, see Yaḥya, 95 ff.; Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 398 ff. For the campaigns of Tzimiskes as emperor cf. Yaḥya, 145 ff.; Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I.

⁶ On the Buwayhid dynasty see Ph. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 470 ff.; C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, 154 f. An interesting remark in regard to the true political situation in Baghdād can be found in the Arabic *Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ed. D. S. Margoliouth) by the tenth-century Karaite exegete Yefeth ben 'Alī. Deviating from the prevalent identification of the "King of the North" (mentioned in the Book of Daniel) with the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, Yefeth states the following, 134, lines 20 f.: اعلم ان صاحب الاسلام المقيم ببغداد غير ولد عباس هو من آل دانيال ("Know ye, that the Prince of Islām established in Baghdād, other than the 'Abbāsīd, is from the North"). See on it Margoliouth's comment in the Preface, vi. For literature on Yefeth ben 'Alī cf. below, 94, note 21. See also other passages from his commentaries as quoted in our next note and further in this chapter.

⁷ Since the Carmathian terror did not leave a lasting imprint on the geo-political map of the Middle East and, in the broader perspective of history, was an episode only, its impact on the thoughts and sentiments of the population contemporary with the events is not sufficiently appreciated. Again, Yefeth ben 'Alī the Karaite, quoted in the previous note, gives us in his *Commentary on the Book of Daniel* an inkling of the general feeling of the time,

prevent a victorious emperor and his lieutenants from returning Antioch, the treasured pearl of the South East, to the imperial fold.

Commenting on Dan. 11:31 ("And arms shall stand up on his part and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the stronghold"), Yefeth alludes to the notorious pillaging of the Ka'bah by the Carmathians under Abū Ṭāhīr in 317 A.H. (=929 C.E.) and to their interference with the pilgrimage to Mecca. While the holy Black Stone was restored twenty years later, the prohibition of the pilgrimage continued well beyond Yefeth's generation and lasted as late as 403 A.H. (=1012 C.E.). This development within Islām must have left a strong impression on the different segments of population in the Middle East, each seething with messianic expectations of its own. Thus, continuing his exposition of the said verse ("and shall take away the continual burnt-offering"), Yefeth explains there, 127, line 12: *انهم يبطلون الحج* ("i.e., that they shall put a stop to the pilgrimage [to Mecca]"). See the full text, 127, lines 5 ff.; Eng. tr., 67. Cf. also the editor's remarks in the Preface, vi.

It is also from Dan. 11:31 that Yefeth borrowed his usual appellation *zerō'im* (i.e., "arms") for the Carmathians. Yefeth uses the same appellation in his Commentary on Isaiah, excerpted from a Petersburg MS by A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 111 f. (Note XI). Interpreting Is. 21:2 in terms of contemporary happenings, he deliberately passes from the Arabic into Hebrew in order to deliver what Neubauer (*op. cit.*, 17) considered to be the strongest indictment of Muḥammad ever indulged in by a Karaite. To this he adds a description of what was inflicted, in turn, on Muḥammad's heritage of "treacherousness and robbery" (alluding to the expressions *bōged* and *shōded* used by Isaiah) by the hand of *zerō'im*, i.e., the Carmathians: *זה הבודג האחרון הם הורועים שימדו ותללו מקדשו... ואלה הורועים יבאשו בנבואתו [=של מתמד] ויקראו שמו נביא שקר ויסבו פניהם ממקום מקדשו ויהפכו רבים מדתו אל רתיהם לכן נקראו בוגרים ושודדים כמו שנקרא הוא [=מתמד] בוגד ושודר*. Neubauer, writing in 1866, cautiously suggested that Yefeth may have had in mind the Shī'ite Fāṭimids who established themselves as independent caliphs in the tenth century. However, against the background of the Daniel Commentary, published in 1889, Yefeth's allusion to the Carmathians becomes perfectly intelligible.

Indeed, the Carmathians seemed so much on the march that Yefeth did not hesitate to identify the apocalyptic "King of the North" with the chief of the Carmathians and to predict his eventual entry into Baghdād (*Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 134, lines 21 f.; Eng. tr., 72). A similar idea is implied in Yefeth's comment on Dan. 11:40 (133, lines 8 ff.; Eng. tr., 71), where a concerted attack on the Caliphate by the "King of the South" (i.e., Byzantium) and the "King of the North" (=the Carmathians) is envisaged. See on it above, 78.

Another term used by Yefeth to denote the Carmathians is *kōsherim* (i.e., "conspirators"). For the derivation of that name see Margoliouth's Glossary to Yefeth's *Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 94, and Preface, vi, note 2. On the Carmathian invasions of the Palestinian city of Ramlah in 968, 971 and 976-77, i.e., during Yefeth's lifetime, see Yaḥya, 119, 142 ff., 181. See also, in general, M. J. De Goeje, *Mémoire sur les Carmathes du Bahraïn et les Fāṭimides*; L. Massignon, in *Enc. of Islām*, II, 767 ff.; Ph. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 443 ff.; C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, 143 ff.; B. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismā'ilism*, 76 ff.; *idem*, in *History of the Crusades* (ed. Baldwin and Setton), I, 99 ff.

An allusion to the Carmathians has been discovered by B. Lewis in a passage which seems to have been incorporated into the text of a Rabbanite Jewish apocalypse. Cf. his "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (University of London), XIII (1949-51), 332. Lewis seems to have been unaware of the material discussed here. See also below, 93, note 19,

His own capital, Aleppo, center of North Syrian commerce, was reduced to the unprecedented state of Muslim vassalage to a Christian sovereign.⁸

THE BYZANTINE CRUSADE

No doubt, there were plain economic drives behind this territorial expansion, spearheaded by the powerful military clans of landed aristocracy in Asia Minor.⁹ But it was the enthusiasm of a Holy War that made the Christian victories in the field possible and aroused excitement among the rank and file of the rival religions which participated in the contest. The Byzantine Crusade preceded by more than a century the crusading movement of Western Christianity.¹⁰

⁸ On the Hamdānids see Yahya, 69 ff., 105 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 164 ff.; Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 457 ff.; Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, 152 ff.; Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 118 ff. On the siege and conquest of Aleppo see Yahya, 86 ff., 125 f., and, for later battles, 209 ff., 247 ff.; Bar-Hebraeus, 168 f.; Schlumberger, *op. cit.*, 226 ff., 241 f. On the victory at Antioch see Yahya, 124 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 172 f.; Schlumberger, *op. cit.*, 718 ff. See also Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 233; Vasiliev, *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 146; *idem*, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 308 f. For a general survey of the situation in Syria cf. further C. Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des croisades*, 177 f.

⁹ Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 24; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 232. Cf. also the latter's general remarks on the agrarian conditions in the time of Nicephor, in *Cambridge Economic History*, I, 208 f.

¹⁰ Ever since A. Rambaud (*L'Empire grec au XIème siècle: Constantin Porphyrogénète*), it has become a matter of unanimous consent among scholars to view the tenth-century Byzantine-Muslim wars as precursory crusades sponsored by Eastern Christianity. Cf. Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 304 ff.; Diehl, in *Byzantium*, ed. Baynes and Moss, 23; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 238; Vasiliev, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 307. Modern historians of the Crusades incorporated the story of the Byzantine military feats of the tenth century into the broader outline of their historical narrative and treated it as the natural prologue to the West European crusading movement. Cf. R. Grousset, *Histoire des croisades et du Royaume franc de Jérusalem*, *Introd.*, vi ff., in which the Byzantine-Muslim campaigns are simply labeled "la croisade byzantine du dixième siècle." See also S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, I, 29 ff.

This seems, however, not to be the procedure of the most recent *History of the Crusades*, I, edited by Baldwin and Setton. Indeed, the correctness of equating the tenth-century Byzantine expeditions against Islām with the Crusades was recently subjected to sober reevaluation. Cf., e.g., P. Lemerle, "Byzance et la Croisade," presented to the Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences (1955), *Relazioni*, III (Storia del Medioevo), 595 ff., esp. 614, note 1. Lemerle is surely right in arguing that the precise legal concept of "crusade" as an *institution*, such as that which grew out of the specific circumstances and concatenation of factors in Western Europe (see his definition, 615), was foreign to Byzantium. He carries, however, his point to an extreme when considering the very crusading *spirit* contrary to the Byzantine *Weltanschauung*.

Thus, enumeration of recovered relics rather than a broader evaluation of the battles and the motives behind them becomes now the major theme of Greek historians. The actual surrender of a famous relic by the city of Edessa resulted in sparing the city and ensuring peace for several years.¹¹ On the other hand, Muslim *jihād* volunteers poured into Cilicia from as far as Khorāsān.¹² A wave of Muslim retaliations against Christians in Islamic lands followed in the wake of the Byzantine victories.¹³ At the same time, Fāṭimid and especially Carmathian propaganda was addressing itself to the interconfessionalist social ideals and longings present among all segments of the population.¹⁴

Whether or not Tzimiskes did in fact approach the walls of Baghdād and whether or not his armies were in sight of the Holy City of Jerusalem, is irrelevant to our inquiry.¹⁵ Even if little historical truth can be expected

It seems that the critics project into the tenth century a later attitude which resulted from Byzantium's sorry experience with what the West hailed as "Crusades" and what appeared to the Byzantines as a shocking distortion of the crusading idea. This idea, while never actually identical with the European concept at its best and never defined institutionally, permeated the expeditions of Nicephor and Tzimiskes.

Indeed, even as late as 1096 the Byzantines had but sympathy and understanding for the popular expedition headed by Peter the Hermit, notwithstanding its exceptionally unruly character. Cf. S. Runciman's paper presented to the same Congress, *Relazioni*, III, 621. See also there, 630, the opinion of C. Cahen, given from the vantage-point of an orientalist, that *the Muslims at first considered the European Crusades merely a variant of the tenth-century Byzantine expeditions.*

¹¹ Cf. Yaḥya, 32 ff.; Bar-Hebraeus, 161 f. The peace lasted from 942-43 to 949-50, when Sayf ad-Daula resolved to break it. Cf. also Tzimiskes' letter to Leo, the Armenian philosopher, inviting him to come "to our capital which is guarded by Divine Providence. There we shall rejoice and celebrate the Feast of the Sandals of Jesus Christ and the Hair of St. John the Baptist" (Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa; cf. note 15, below).

¹² Yaḥya, 96, 109 ff., 115 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 171 f.

¹³ Yaḥya, 21, 81 f., 84 f., 103 f., 109 ff.

¹⁴ See on it B. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismā'ilism*, 93 ff.; *idem*, in Baldwin-Setton, *History of the Crusades*, I, 103 f.

¹⁵ Cf. Tzimiskes' claims as quoted in the Armenian Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa, partial French translation by F. Martin, *Détails historiques de la première expédition des Chrétiens dans la Palestine sous l'Empereur Zimiscès* (ed. 1811), and by E. Dulaurier, *Récueil des historiens des croisades, Documents Arméniens*, I. The text of the emperor's letter to King Ashot III of Armenia is likewise reproduced in French version in Schlumberger's *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 283 ff. See there also the detailed discussion of the campaigns, 242 ff., and esp. 257 ff. and 282 ff.

For a more restrained evaluation of the letter to Ashot consult Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 238, and Vasiliev, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 310. In the face of the widespread acceptance of the imperial letters quoted by Matthew as authentic, my own misgivings as to their genuineness have to be silenced.

from such claims of emperors and chroniclers, the claims themselves are highly significant.¹⁶ They show that it was the crusading spirit attaching to these orthodox expeditions that helped the Empire to move her troops into battle.¹⁷ No wonder, then, that Nicephor Phocas called upon the Orthodox Church to recognize the soldiers fallen in the fighting against the Saracens as martyrs of the Holy War.¹⁸

THE WARS OF GOG AND MAGOG

The Jews throughout the ages were by no means neutral spectators in

¹⁶ In his letter to Ashot Tzimiskes relates that his desire was "to liberate the Holy Sepulchre from the filthy hands of the Turks." He is disappointed with the tactical retreat of the Muslim forces to the coastal fortresses. Otherwise, the Byzantine troops would have marched on and "entered Jerusalem, the Holy City, and prayed to God on the Holy Sites." In fact, not only Tzimiskes but even his predecessor, Nicephor Phocas, was credited with having set the conquest of Jerusalem as his main objective. Cf. Bar-Hebraeus, 172. This is taken for granted by J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire*, 9.

¹⁷ This spirit expresses itself not only in Tzimiskes' epistle to Ashot but also in the closing sections of Nicephor's treatise on warfare (*De velitatione bellica*; cf. Hussey, *Church and Learning*, 9). It soars to the point of ecstasy in the description of the Triumph at the Forum Augusteion on the return of the Basileus from a victory over the Agarenes, the "detractors of the Theotokos." Cf. the presentation of the triumphal scenes from *De cerimoniis*, in Schlumberger's *Nicephore Phocas*, 99 ff., and in his *Récits de Byzance et des croisades* (2nd Series), 11 ff. Cf. also L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'Empire byzantin* [= *Le monde byzantin*, II], 377 f.

¹⁸ Cf. Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 393 f. In the aforementioned paper of P. Lemerle, *Relazioni*, III, 618, note 1, the point is argued that, contrary to accepted notion, the demand of Nicephor shows rather the *absence* of the "idea of crusade" in the Empire. Lemerle's reasoning is not convincing. Whether Nicephor borrowed his idea from Islām or from a precedent in Western Christianity is, of course, a problem worth looking into; but, whatever its solution, it does not detract from the *climate of opinion and feeling* in which this suggestion was brought up in Byzantium.

Nicephor's request was surely motivated also by other than purely religious incentives (although not even his adversaries have questioned his deep religiosity). Yet, the proclamation he has solicited from the Church authorities would have served no purpose if it did not embody the yearnings of the many who were called upon to give their lives for the Empire. He, the soldier-emperor, who for many years shared with his troops the hardships of the field, understood the thoughts and feelings of his fellow warriors better than did the clergy in the ivory towers of Constantinople. He, therefore, planned to put the contagion of the enthusiasm generated by the Holy War to the service of the Empire, and at the same time imbue the individual's efforts with a meaning that was part of the spiritual make-up of the generation.

The fact that the emperor's plea was rejected by the clergy, because of conflicting interests (which have no bearing on our discussion), can hardly be a reflection on the true Byzantine attitude to the "idea of crusade." Rather, it shows that theologians and jurists do not always keep in step with the sentiments and emotions of the average believers. It is these sentiments and emotions of tenth-century men in East Mediterranean lands that are relevant to our story.

the centuries-long struggle between Islām and Christianity.¹⁹ Now, with the turning of the tide, they were quick to grasp the full import of the events and the pregnant consequences of this change in the aims and fortunes of the contending powers: surely, the “Wars of Gōg and Magōg” were in the making.

“Mourners of Zion” called for repentance.

Behold [calls a late tenth-century Karaite missionary], the days of reckoning for the [Gentile] nations have drawn near and the time of salvation for Israel is approaching. God will bring this time nearer to us and will redeem us from the hand of the “two women” [i.e., the two Rabbanite Academies], and He will appoint as king over us the Messiah, the descendant of King David, as it is written, “Behold, the king cometh unto thee” (Zech. 9:9). Wherefore, our brethren, do not harden your hearts against us [i.e., against the Karaite preachers] and lend your ears to us. Do come and search for our ways and investigate our path—perchance God will send a cure to our affliction and will have mercy on our remnant.²⁰

Even more intensively than before, anxious minds, Rabbanite and Karaite alike, checked and rechecked the perennial messianic calculations

¹⁹ Cf. J. Ibn Shemūel [Kaufmann], *Midreshē Ge’ūlah*. See also the brief résumé of Jewish messianic speculation in the Muslim period by A. H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, 36 ff. Recently, B. Lewis quite plausibly argued that part of the Rabbanite *Prayer of Rabbi Shime’ōn bar Yōḥay* should be read in the context of the Tzimiskes campaign in Palestine. Cf. his “An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XIII (1949–51), 308 ff., esp. 333 ff. Similarly, Hai Gaon’s famous responsum “On Redemption” has now convincingly been reinterpreted by Professor Baron as echoing tenth-century Byzantine successes. Cf. the chapter on “Messianism and Sectarian Trends,” in the new edition of Baron’s *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V (on Hai, 161 f., 364, n. 22). In that chapter the medieval apocalyptic, philosophic, paitanic and exegetical creations of messianic dreamers have admirably been woven into the general historic pattern of the era. The appended apparatus offers an extensive, by far the most comprehensive reference guide on the subject. For obvious reasons the stress in the present discussion was put on Karaite literature alone. It should, however, be always borne in mind that messianic expectations, while varying in degree and form of expression from one segment of the population to another, were shared by Rabbanites and Karaites alike all through the ages. Cf. also the popular survey by J. Greenstone of *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History*, esp. 114 ff., which, however, needs many rectifications. For the early literary sources of Jewish messianism cf. J. Klausner’s *Ha-Ra’ayōn ham-Meshiḥi be-Yisrael*.

²⁰ Cf. Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, in Pinsker’s *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 43 (*Karaite Anthology*, 120 f.): והנה קרבו ימי פקודה על האומות וקרבו זמן הישועה על ישראל והאלהים יקרב הזמן עלינו ויפדנו: מיד השמים נשים וימלך עלינו משיח בן דוד הע"ה ככתוב (זכר' ט' ט) הנה מלכך יבא לך. ועתה אחינו אל תקשו לבבכם עמנו והטו אזניכם אלינו ובואו לחפש דרכינו ולחקור נתיבתנו אולי יתן ה' רפואה למכתנו ויחמול כי ימי המצורף באו ועת ומשפט לעשות לה' הגיעו ואשרי המתעורר ומקיץ משנתו ואוי ואבוי לכל מעלים עין כי הוא אתם בני ישראל חמלו על נפשותיכם וחוסרו על: And again, *ibid.*, 34: בניכם כי הנה האור מאיר והשמש זורחת, בחרו לכם הדרך הטובה אשר בה המים החיים ולכו בה ואל חלכו בארך ציה ועיף בלי מים.

in a frantic effort to unlock the fateful enigmas sealed since centuries past in the pages of the Daniel apocalypse.²¹

For, inasmuch as they temporarily accepted the international *status quo* that the kingdom of the Romans shall remain simultaneously with the kingdom of the Arabs, and that the Arabs shall be partners with them therein (Yefeth b. 'Ali on Daniel 2: 41),²²

they knew also with certainty that

"The time of the end" (Dan. 11: 40), includes two things: (1) the end of the success of this [i.e., Muslim] kingdom; and (2) the end of the indignation against Israel (Yefeth on Dan. 11: 40).²³

True, the ultimate outcome of the universal upheaval was beyond a shadow of doubt, for,

even if there be other kingdoms in the world besides Byzantium and Arabia..., all of them shall obey the kingdom of God, Exalted be He, i.e., the kingdom of His nation and of His Messiah (Yefeth on Dan. 7: 27).²⁴

²¹ See the summary of messianic calculations, as given by Yefeth ben 'Ali the Karaite in his already-quoted *Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ed. D. S. Margoliouth), Arabic text, from 151, line 21, to the end of the book, 153; Eng. tr., 86. A Hebrew abridgment of Yefeth's excursus was incorporated by the Byzantine Jacob ben Reuben into his *Sefer ha-'Osher*, Daniel Section, 20a-b. Introduced, along with other excerpts of Yefeth's Commentary, without due credit to the original, it gave rise at first to erroneous interpretations. See above, 30, note 9. Pinsker's comparative study (*Likḳūšē*, App. VIII, 80 ff.) has finally demonstrated Jacob ben Reuben's dependence on Yefeth.

For the use of eager readers in the Arabic-speaking environment, the messianic references in Yefeth's commentaries have been collected into a pamphlet entitled *Sharḥ al-'Athidoth* ("Explanation of Future Things"). Neubauer reported a copy of it in the Firkowicz Collection; cf. *Journal Asiatique*, 6th Series, V (1865), 548 f., and his *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 7, n. 1. Cf. also N. Wieder's pertinent remarks regarding what he terms the "prognostic-eschatological interpretation" of the Scripture by Karaite "Mourners of Zion," *JQR* (N.S.), XLVII (1956-57), esp. 99, 103, 106 f., 271 ff. Wieder is interested in this phenomenon primarily as a *literary genre* peculiar to sectarians of all times.

Regarding Yefeth ben 'Ali see Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*, 81 ff.; Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah*, 20 ff.; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 30 ff. (cf. also 26 ff.); D. S. Margoliouth's Preface to Yefeth's *Commentary on the Book of Daniel*; Ph. Birnbaum's Introduction to *The Arabic Commentary of Yefeth ben 'Ali the Karaite on the Book of Hosea*; N. Schornstein's Introduction to *Der Commentar des Karäers Jepheth ben 'Ali zum Buche Ruth*; Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 83 ff. The publication of all available MSS of Yefeth's exegetical works is indispensable if a comprehensive presentation of Karaite contribution to biblical exegesis is ever to be undertaken. It will also prove immensely beneficial to historical research, in view of Yefeth's inclination to read the Bible in the context of historical events and processes witnessed in his own time.

²² D. S. Margoliouth (ed.), *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Jepheth ibn 'Ali the Karaite* (Anecdota Oxoniensa, Semitic Series, I, Bk. 3), 29, lines 11 ff.; Eng. tr., 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, 133, lines 8 ff.; Eng. tr., 71.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 80, lines 4 f.; Eng. tr., 38.

Yet, every act of this world-wide drama must be performed to the last detail, and

till the end of wars—i.e., the Wars of Gōg—Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall lie waste, as has been witnessed up to our day (Yefeth on Dan. 9:26).²⁵

A watchful eye should therefore be kept on the changing international scene. It is, unfortunately, true that none of the parties involved deserved unqualified Jewish sympathy. Experience teaches us to expect

both kings, of Arabia and Byzantium alike. . . , to do some harm to Israel, each of them in some fashion, as is well manifest from the behavior of Islām and Christianity (Yefeth on Dan. 11:27).²⁶

Still, the turning of the tide in favor of Byzantium is a welcome sign. It fits in marvelously with the prophetic prediction of the Divine scheme:

The first battles were all advantageous to Ishmael and against the King of the South [=Byzantium]. The last shall be all advantageous to the King of the South and against Ishmael (Yefeth on Dan. 11:29).²⁷

Indeed,

some portion of the operations of the King of the South has been realized in our time. I refer to certain battles wherein he has taken from the Muslims Antioch, Tarsus, 'Ain Zarbah and the region. But *more events are still to come* (Yefeth on Dan. 11:40).²⁸

"SCORCHED EARTH" POLICY

But there were realities of life which called for less dreamy and more reasoned evaluation of the unmistakable changes in the international scene and of the economic repercussions thereof. The ravaged countryside of Northern Syria wore unhealed scars of perennial seasonal raids.

The people live ever in terror of the Byzantines [reports a contemporary Muslim geographer], almost as though they were in a land of exile. For their frontiers are continuously ravaged and their fortresses are again and again destroyed.²⁹

Famine and plague were frequent visitors.³⁰ The "scorched earth" policy of Nicephor was so successful that "nobody had any doubt as to Nicephor's eventual conquest of the whole of Syria."³¹

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 102, lines 14 ff.; Eng. tr., 51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 124, lines 20 f.; Eng. tr., 65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 126, lines 14 f.; Eng. tr., 66. For the identification of the apocalyptic "King of the South" with Byzantium, cf. *ibid.*, 115, line 22; Eng. tr., 59. Similarly, Hai Gaon predicted in his "Responsum on Redemption" that ישראל לא יקחו ישראל. Cf. in *Midreshē Ge'ūlah*, 135 ff., and in Abraham ben 'Azriel's 'Arūgath hab-Bosem (ed. E. E. Urbach), 256 ff. See also above, 93, note 19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 133, lines 8 ff.; Eng. tr., 71.

²⁹ Muḳaddasī, *Description of Syria Including Palestine*, Eng. tr. by Guy Le Strange, in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, III, 4.

³⁰ Cf. Yahya, 96, 98, 127 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 161, 170, 172, 176.

³¹ See Yahya's terrifying description of Nicephor's "scorched earth" policy, 127 f.

Indeed, the situation that arose in the wake of the systematic plunder and devastation was so serious that in the summer of 963 the two opposing camps had to withdraw completely from Cilicia because of famine.³² Again, in the winter of 964-65, the danger of starvation compelled the two contending forces to return to their bases. Even the special formations of *jihād* volunteers from Khorāsān had to disband.³³ Bar-Hebraeus' report on the immediate action taken by Nicephor Phocas in liberated Tarsus and in the rest of Cilicia in order to alleviate the acute shortage of food is highly significant. It demonstrates to what extent the imperial policy-makers were aware of the impact of hunger and weariness of war on the indigenous population and made these factors play into the hands of the conquerors.³⁴

This situation could not but lead to complete demoralization in the rural areas of Syria which were always first to bear the brunt of both an offensive aimed at broader regions and a siege directed against the cities.

Some have become apostates [complains the contemporary Muslim reporter], while others pay tribute to the infidels. . . . The Syrian people show neither zeal for the Holy War nor honor for those who fight against the infidel.³⁵

The great caravan cities and commercial centers of Syria shared the lot of the countryside. Those lying in the direct path of the invaders were laid waste at sword's point. Those removed from the immediate frontline were deserted by the terrified population and presented a picture of tragedy and desolation. The Christians were heading westwards to the cities along the Mediterranean coast, expecting them to fall soon into the hands of their Byzantine coreligionists. The Muslims sought refuge in Damascus, Baniās, Ramḡah—indeed, even in far-off Baghdād.³⁶

ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The decline of Syrian cities was not a passing phenomenon, one that would naturally manifest itself whenever there was immediate danger of battle and siege. Rather, it was a process which set in with the beginning of hostilities and, once in motion, could no longer be reversed even when the actual fighting had ceased.

³² Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 404.

³³ *Ibid.*, 476 ff.

³⁴ Bar-Hebraeus, 171; Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 500 ff.

³⁵ Muḡaddasī, *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, III, 4.

³⁶ Bar-Hebraeus, 167, 169 f. See also below, 100, note 55.

Thus, writing some fifteen years after Nicephor's operations in Syria,³⁷ Muḳaddasī was unable to report any improvement in the situation. Kinnasrin, for instance, was "a town of which the population has decreased."³⁸ As for Emessa (Ḥims), the largest town in Syria, it "has suffered great misfortunes and is indeed threatened with ruin."³⁹ "The other towns of these parts are also falling into decay, though prices are moderate, and such of them as are on the coast are well provided with ramparts."⁴⁰ On the other hand, the inland city of Baniyas still remained, after all these years, a haven for refugees. "To this place have migrated the greater part of the Muslim inhabitants of the frontier districts since Tarsus was taken, and the population is still on the increase, for daily men come hither."⁴¹

These facts were but symptoms of a profound economic transformation which accompanied the political and territorial changes in the Middle East. Neither the efforts at rapid physical reconstruction⁴² nor the specific commercial clauses in armistice agreements could turn back the clock of history.⁴³ The Euphrates was sealed to upstream traffic and the Indian commerce proceeded merely in trickles from the Persian Gulf northward to Antioch and thence to the Empire and Western Europe.⁴⁴ Instead, a more southerly route enhanced the commercial importance of Egypt which was, since the year 969, firmly in Fāṭimid hands and constituted the only real power in the Muslim East.⁴⁵ Egypt could, by virtue of her geographic position, be directly linked with the Byzantine coast. The time did not seem imminent yet when wares

³⁷ About 985 C.E.

³⁸ Muḳaddasī, *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, III, 13 f.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24 f.

⁴² On Nicephor's efforts to rehabilitate Tarsus see Yahya, 99; Bar-Hebraeus, 171. On the other hand, swift rebuilding action was also taken by the Muslim prince of Aleppo. Cf. Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 398.

⁴³ The Aleppo treaty, preserved by Kemāl ad-Dīn (cf. Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 729 ff., esp. 732), contains important commercial provisions. See also W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age* (ed. 1923), I, 43 f.; R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 30 f. Byzantine coins of the period, with an added imprint in Arabic, may also be pointing to a possible monetary agreement between the conquering Empire and the vassal Muslim principality. Cf. on that Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 321 f.

⁴⁴ L. Brentano, *Die byzantinische Volkswirtschaft*, 49. About the upstream caravan route and the traffic on the road linking the Euphrates with Antioch and Aleppo, traffic in which Jewish merchants also had a share, see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, I, 42 ff.

⁴⁵ Brentano, *Byz. Volkswirtschaft*, 49.

would be taken from Egypt on Venetian ships directly to Italy and the West, bypassing the Golden Horn altogether.

THE PLIGHT OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Historians have preserved some valuable information concerning the fate of the general indigenous population in the vanquished territories. The usual policy of the Byzantine conquerors with regard to Muslim survivors of annexed cities was either a wholesale transfer to a far-away imperial province, or an almost empty-handed exile to the land of their coreligionists across the border (except for the customary toll of captives).⁴⁶ We know, too, that Christian settlers were invited to repopulate the desolated areas.⁴⁷ However, nothing is reported about the fate of the local Jewish populations.

The Jews lived in the commercial cities of the areas under contention. As a matter of fact, they were never really numerous. Actively involved in the North Syrian commerce, they were ordinarily seen moving along the main caravan routes of the country.⁴⁸ Surely, in the general upheaval and amid the constant stream of refugees and captives on a wavering front, the Jews were inconspicuous enough not to have drawn the attention of contemporary observers. The Byzantine writers were essentially interested in the enumeration of recovered holy relics; the Muslim historians were much too absorbed in their nation's catastrophe. The plight of the Jews, who must have suffered a great deal, passed unnoticed.

It may be presumed that the Jews suffered mostly during the fighting proper and in the course of siege and assault. For instance, the area adjoining the Jewish Gate (*Bāb al-Yahūd*) in Aleppo⁴⁹ figures promi-

⁴⁶ On the transfer of the Muslims of Ma'arraḥ Maşrīn to Greece see Yaḥya, 117. Bar-Hebraeus, 173, reports the same procedure in regard to the Antiochians. Cf. Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 723 f. See there also, 486 ff., details on the populations of 'Ain Zarba and Maşşīṣāh. The exile of the Muslim inhabitants of Tarsus into Muslim territory is attested to by Yaḥya, 98 f., and Bar-Hebraeus, 170. Cf. also Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 497 f.; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 31 f.; *idem*, *Byzantine Civilization*, 102.

⁴⁷ Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 486 f., 723 f. Christian *coloni* would be induced to settle on the abandoned soil by a promise of land distribution.

⁴⁸ On Jewish participation in the Syrian commerce see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, I, 43, note 2. For population numbers cf. later in this chapter.

⁴⁹ Cf. Yaḥya, 87 f., 199, 204 f., 230. Cf. also Muḳaddasī's remark in connection with the "Gate of the Jews" in Aleppo, *Description of Syria*, 13, and note 4 there. Muḳaddasī reports that the *Bāb al-Arba'in* (=the "Gate of the Forty"), which lies beyond the *Bāb al-Yahūd*, "is now [i.e., in 985] closed."

nently as the constantly recurring scene of battle between the hostile camps.⁵⁰ The Jewish population of the neighborhood, which included a Karaite community, must have borne heavily the brunt of the incessant wars.⁵¹

We may assume that the Jews in Damascus were subject to similar troubles as a result of chaotic conditions prevalent in that city. Damascus, in which the most famous Rabbanite and Karaite communities of the area were located,⁵² became the object of internecine contentions between

See also on Aleppo and its gates the *Diary of a Journey through Syria and Palestine* of Naṣir-i-Khusrau, Eng. tr. from the Persian by Guy le Strange, in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, IV, 2. In the time of the Crusades the name of the "Gate of the Jews" was changed to *Bāb an-Naṣr*, i.e., the "Gate of the Christians." See also Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 231, 238, 519; *idem*, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 522, 546 f., 550; and, for a later period, the testimonies assembled by E. Strauss [Ashtor], *Töledoht hay-Yehüdīm be-Miṣrayīm we-Sūrya*, I, 273.

⁵⁰ On the Aleppo campaigns see the references from Yaḥya, above, 90, note 8. On the peace treaty following the city's defeat see Yaḥya, 25 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 173. See also 97, above, note 43. For the subsequent renewal of the treaty see Yaḥya, 209 f.

⁵¹ Of the existence of a Karaite community in Aleppo in the tenth century we learn from the account of Salman ben Yerūḥam's funeral in that town. Cf. "Ibn al-Hitī's Chronicle of Karaite Doctors," edited and translated by G. Margoliouth, *JQR* (O.S.), IX (1897), Arabic text, 432 ff., English version, 436 ff., Introduction, 429 ff. A more recent translation is that included by L. Nemoj in his *Karaite Anthology*, 230 ff. (cf. also his comments, 69). The crucial passage is in *JQR*, 434, and in the *Karaite Anthology*, 233 f. See further Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 14 (also his review of Margoliouth's work in *ZfHB*, II [1897], 78 ff.), and Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 21.

True, al-Hitī's story of Saadyah's attendance at the funeral of Salman ben Yerūḥam in Aleppo is undoubtedly apocryphal. Yet there can be no doubt of the existence of a Karaite community in that city; it was there that Salman, one of the most ardent Karaite polemicists of all times (see on him further in this chapter), spent the latter part of his life and found scope for his activity. As late as the fifteenth century his grave was venerated by the inhabitants of Aleppo, Jews and Gentiles alike. See more on the general problem of al-Hitī's reliability in my "The Chronicle of Ibn al-Hitī and the Chronology of Joseph al-Baṣīr," *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1-2 (1957), 71 f. On the adherence of the Aleppo community to the Palestino-centric Karaite calendar, see below, note 115 to Chapter VII.

⁵² On the Karaite community in Damascus see Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 201 ff. Sometime in the eleventh or twelfth century a seat of a Karaite *Nesiūth* (i.e., Patriarchate) was established in the city by a branch of the Davidic House of 'Anan (*ibid.*, 144 ff.). In the already-cited case of Nathan ben Abraham against the Palestinian gaon Solomon ben Yehūdah, the Damascus Karaites sided with the usurper. This is, at any rate, what Nathan himself reports in a communication to one of his disciples. Cf. his letter in Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fātimids*, II, 172, lines 15 ff. In the early second half of the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela found the Karaite community in Damascus conspicuous enough to register the number of its members. See his *Itinerary* (ed. Asher), Hebrew text, 48, Eng. tr., 86. The Damascus Karaites, too, followed the Palestino-centric system of calendation. See below, Chapter VII, note 115.

local princes, Fāṭimid caliphs and Byzantine emperors. For a while it was even forced to accept Byzantine suzerainty.⁵³

The effect on the Jews residing in the many less prominent communities, which may also have contained a Karaite population, must have been equally pronounced. Indeed, with the occupation of great stretches of Muslim territory by Byzantine forces, many of these localities were outrightly incorporated into the newly organized imperial Themes of the East.⁵⁴

LOOKING AHEAD

Chances are that some of the Jews of the affected areas succeeded in fleeing in time to Palestine and perhaps even Egypt.⁵⁵ However, very soon the Fāṭimid Caliphate, using now Egypt as its base of operations (from 969 on), spread northward, to Palestine and Southern Syria. There, along the borderline territory, it engaged in a contest for supremacy with Byzantium.⁵⁶ With the Carmathian eruptions adding to the turmoil, the southbound exit route from Syria probably lost much of its advantage and appeal for the refugees.⁵⁷

Indeed, Jewish (including Karaite) communities and individuals—both those living in the provinces of Northern Syria and Mesopotamia which

⁵³ Yahya, 160 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 174 f.; Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 294 ff. (also 563 f.). On Damascus as center of medieval commerce and hub of caravan and pilgrimage routes, see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, I, 26 f., 42.

⁵⁴ On these Themes (i.e., military-administrative regional structures) see Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 251. Consult there also the map of the eastern territories, pertinent to the period. A good picture of the extent of Byzantine expansion in the time under review can be gathered from a comparison of Map II, "Fines Orientales Imperii Byzantini (Annum 960)," with Map III, "Syria Byzantina (Annum 1050)," in E. Honigmann's *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches* (constituting Volume III of Vasiliev's *Byzance et les Arabes*).

⁵⁵ On the flight of the population to cities like Baniyas, Ramlah, etc., see our quotations above, 96f. (and notes). Both Ramlah and Baniyas had conspicuous Karaite communities. Cf. for Ramlah the documents published by Mann, in *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, and by Assaf and Mayer, in their *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II. Baniyas was the scene of activity of the only known Karaite pseudo-messiah, Solomon, who was met there in 1121 by the Norman proselyte 'Obadyah. Cf. Mann, "The Messianic Movements in the Time of the Early Crusades" (Hebrew), *Hattekūfah*, XXIV (1928), 336 ff.; S. D. Goitein, "Obadyah, a Norman Proselyte," *JJS*, IV (1953), 74 ff. It is impossible, however, to decide from the present state of sources whether the Karaite community of Baniyas was already in existence in the second half of the tenth century.

⁵⁶ Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, 206 ff., 280 ff., 567, and the note thereto. Cf. also Vasiliev, *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 149; *idem*, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 311.

⁵⁷ An illuminating comment regarding the precarious conditions on the southbound route can be found in the contemporaneous reply of Agapios, a newly appointed patriarch of Antioch, to Elija, the patriarch of Alexandria. The latter was disturbed

were formally incorporated into the imperial administrative system and those inhabiting the bordering regions which remained in Muslim hands but were now in a state of political vassalage and economic dependence—must have thoroughly reappraised the entire situation. Adjustment to the new regime, however painful and contrary to accustomed patterns and traditional loyalties, would have to be undertaken. In fact, the resulting international state of affairs might even carry with it, after the cessation of hostilities, the promise of a prosperous future. Emerging now as the stronghold of peace and political stability, the Empire alone would be in the position to extend to a non-belligerent minority, engaged in international trade, the prospects for an expanding economic enterprise.⁵⁸ Moreover, commercial acumen and initiative might find a profitable outlet in the westward vistas that were being revealed now by the Byzantine conquests and by the subsequent shift of international frontiers.⁵⁹

In the first place, the trans-Syrian international commerce, although much reduced in volume, was not entirely dead. Specific commercial clauses in the agreements governing the relationship of vassal territories to their imperial suzerain safeguarded the freedom of trade.⁶⁰ True, these clauses could not, as already noted, reverse the overall trend that

by the irregularity of procedure when Agapios was appointed to the patriarchal see. In his apology Agapios blamed the general turmoil for the lack of proper communication between him and his senior colleague in Alexandria: Why, even birds are reluctant these days to cover the distance separating Antioch from Alexandria! The Egyptian church dignitary, well aware of the road situation, considered the excuse sufficiently convincing. Cf. the lengthy story in Yahya, 170 ff., esp. 173.

(Incidentally, such a characterization of traffic difficulties must have been popular at all times. Writing some eight hundred years later to Jerusalem, the Karaite Simḥah ben Solomon described in similar terms the eighteenth-century situation: *במה צר ומצוק... בהיות הדרכים סגורים ולא יכלו לברוא מפילו הצפדים* Cf. his epistle in Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 391 f.)

⁵⁸ On Byzantium as stronghold of peace and stability in the ensuing period, see Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 95 f.; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 225. On the Jewish international trade see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, I, 125 ff.; H. Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, 11 f.; S. W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), IV, 171 ff., and the bibliography listed in the notes thereto; S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 105 ff.

⁵⁹ In his *Toledoth hak-Kalkalah hay-Yehūdith*, I, 154 ff., I. Schipper, relying almost exclusively on the twelfth-century *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela, underestimates the mercantile enterprise of the Jews in Byzantium. This is, however, a one-sided picture, reflecting the twelfth-century situation in the European part of the Empire only. It ignores the commercial aspects of the tenth-century oriental element which joined native Byzantine Jewry in the wake of the international developments depicted here. See, however, G. I. Bratianu, *Etudes byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale*, 137 f. Cf. also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 30 ff.

⁶⁰ See above, 97, note 43.

had transformed the economic map of the region; but they were not devoid altogether of practical importance.

Secondly, the annexation into the Empire of whole new provinces and their integration into the economy of Asia Minor opened new avenues for further immigration inland. At that time Asia Minor was truly the most vital component in the imperial organization.⁶¹ The advantages of that natural land bridge connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and Europe with Asia must have seemed immensely attractive to the Rabbanite and Karaite merchants, much as they had seemed to their non-Jewish neighbors in the ravaged eastern cities. A movement inland, along the well-kept Anatolian roads and into Anatolia's busy harbors and commercial centers, could not but lead eventually to permanent settlement of eastern trader groups within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire.

THE MOVEMENT INLAND

An actual example of such voluntary transfer into Byzantine territory of a group which, like the Jews, traditionally preferred the dominion of Islām to Byzantine rule, is indeed cited for the year 990. It was one of those cases when, according to Bar-Hebraeus, wealthy Christians from the Muslim East immigrated into regions which were now dominated by Basil II.⁶² The tremendous economic opportunities, offered by the "West" (i.e., Byzantium) through its spectacular territorial expansion eastwards in the tenth century, made the eastern Christians forget, so it seems, their sad experience under imperial Orthodoxy and helped them integrate into the Empire's no less expanding heterogeneous society.⁶³

⁶¹ Cf. Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 10, 62. On Asia Minor in general, see A. Philippson, *Das byzantinische Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 134-64; E. Banse, *Die Türkei: Eine moderne Geographie* (2nd ed.); and, most recently, P. Birot and J. Dresch, *La Méditerranée et le Moyen Orient*, II, 127-92.

⁶² Cf. E. W. Budge, *The Syriac Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj Bar-Hebraeus*, I (English version), 178.

⁶³ There is, of course, no need to turn to Bar-Hebraeus also for an *explanation* of that specific migration he reported, or of the undoubtedly numerous similar migrations which he failed to report. The thirteenth-century chronicler was far from grasping the *broader* economic forces propelling the phenomenon he described. His interest in the case was limited mainly to the churches and monasteries which, in the given instance, the rich immigrants had built "wherever they came." The population shift as such belonged, by his own candid classification, to those "small matters" which assumed importance only inasmuch as they showed "how extraordinarily prosperous these people of ours were in olden times, and to what state of misery they have come" in the chronicler's generation.

The modern observer cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that the richest among the immigrants mentioned by Bar-Hebraeus had settled in Melitene, the eastern terminus of the ancient trans-Anatolian highway leading to the Aegean.⁶⁴ Modified under the Byzantines,⁶⁵ that main artery of communication channeled into the Empire—ever since the tenth-century Byzantine victories till the establishment of the Seljuks in the heart of Anatolia some four generations later—not only eastern commodities but recurrent waves of eastern populations as well. Constantinople alone—this we shall learn presently from Bar-Hebraeus—absorbed in the early eleventh century an influx of a hundred thousand easterners in the brief span of three decades only. These immigrant Armenians, Arabs and Jews poured into the capital, following the tenth-century extension of the Byzantine domains in the East, in spite of the restrictions on movements of “aliens” within the city walls.⁶⁶ In Asia Minor and adjacent Byzantine Themes, which long since were a conglomerate of eastern ethnical groups and where no such restrictions were in force, the self-same chronicler mentions for the year 993 a wave of Armenian migration inland; the Armenian group, so we are apprised, spread all over Cappadocia, Cilicia and the Byzantine-held portions of Syria.⁶⁷ A careful perusal of the available sources would manifoldly multiply instances of the kind just culled out of Bar-Hebraeus’ *Chronography*.

In brief: there is no doubt that migration waves into the imperial provinces repeated themselves with ever-increasing frequency all through

The particular movement inland just cited was attributed by Bar-Hebraeus merely to oppression “by the taxes imposed by unjust [Muslim] landlords.” However, this argument pales considerably in the light of his further report on the immigrants’ vicissitudes in the Empire. They have suffered, so we learn, in the early years of their sojourn in Byzantium from extortion by the hand of the Byzantine ruler no less than they did under Islām—and lo, “their wealth was not diminished.” Accepting the basic data supplied by Bar-Hebraeus (though not his interpretation of these data), one cannot, then, escape the notion that, while taxes may indeed have been a nuisance in the decaying Muslim East, they hardly lay at the root of the westward migrations.

⁶⁴ See on that highway below, 105 (and note 73), 107. Recently, R. S. Lopez quite correctly stressed the importance of “the trans-Anatolian military and commercial roads which the New Rome inherited from the Old and kept up as best as she could.” Cf. his masterly paper on the “East and West in the Early Middle Ages: Economic Relations,” presented to the Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences (1955), *Relazioni*, III (Storia del Medioevo), 148.

⁶⁵ Cf. below, 105 f., and note 74.

⁶⁶ Cf. the quotation below, 139. On the restrictions on “aliens” see our discussion further in this chapter, 138.

⁶⁷ Bar-Hebraeus, 179.

the late tenth and the first half of the eleventh century. They involved Christians and Jews, even Muslims, from Northern Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Syria.⁶⁸ In the early eleventh century refugees came from Egypt also.⁶⁹ It seems, however, that most of the cases failed altogether to get registered by contemporary historians. The more frequent and natural these demographic shifts became in the structure of the Anatolian and general Byzantine society, the less chance there was for testimonies of such shifts to go on record and be preserved for posterity. After all, the few instances reported to this effect by Bar-Hebraeus were saved from oblivion not because of their intrinsic importance for the study of population movements in Byzantium but because of some utterly coincidental details or circumstances which happened to draw the attention of the Syriac chronicler, himself a native of Melitene.⁷⁰

It is, then, as part of that widespread "movement inland" of eastern trader groups in the period under discussion that one can best understand also the seemingly sudden appearance of Karaite communities at different junctions of the Anatolian road system. Drifting along westwards, together with Rabbanite and non-Jewish merchants, some of the Karaite traders have gradually struck root in their new environment and have laid down permanent foundations for Karaite life on Byzantine soil. In the coming pages our task will be to map this advance of Karaite immigrant groups inland and attempt to understand the objectives underlying the direction (or directions) of that advance. First, therefore, a closer look at the Anatolian roads, as they unfolded before the newcomer from the East, is in order.

ALONG THE ROADS OF ANATOLIA

The story of Asia Minor is instructively reflected in the history of the

⁶⁸ Syrians enjoyed greater rights than other foreigners. These are briefly discussed by R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 30 f. Cf. also above, 80, note 59.

⁶⁹ On the migration from Egypt, following the persecutions of Christians and Jews by al-Ḥākim, see the closing section of the present chapter.

[For a twelfth-century migration from Egypt, see the new material cited in notes 107a, 109a.]

⁷⁰ The reason for Bar-Hebraeus' concern with the migration of 990 C.E. has already been mentioned (note 63). The migration of 993 interested the chronicler because it involved a group believed to be descendant of Sennacherib. Bar-Hebraeus expatiated on the problem to some length and explained in this way the Armenian cognomen "Sanhibites." The migration to Constantinople was never really told by the chronicler in so many words. It is simply implied in his story of the Constantinople riots in 1044. Cf. the text as cited below, 139.

On Bar-Hebraeus as native of Melitene, see Budge's biographical Introduction to his translation of the *Chronography*, I, xv.

Anatolian network of commercial and military roads. While guided, as a rule, by convenience, by the needs and prospects of commercial exchange and by the natural lines of the region's geography, the Anatolian road system was successively bent to suit the dictates of historical factors as they came into play.⁷¹

The central aim of the ancient road system in Asia Minor was to connect the province with Rome.⁷² This basic political objective of the Roman administration coincided here with the main direction of trans-Anatolian commerce which was geared to the East-West traffic leading from the eastern provinces to the Aegean and continuing thence, across sea, to Greece, Italy, etc. Characteristic of the above tendency is the aforecited great Roman highway, cutting horizontally across Anatolia, from Melitene in the Euphrates region to Ephesus on the western coast, with its maritime extensions reaching out to Rome.⁷³ However, this road system, devised originally with a view to easy communication, commercial, military and administrative, with the capital of the Roman Empire, had undergone a profound, though only partial, change with the transfer of the capital to the East, first to Nicomedia (by Diocletian), then to Constantinople. Since the fourth century, it is *New Rome* on the Bosphorus that rises gradually as the ultimate goal of Anatolian roads.

The ensuing "Byzantine" road system, while essentially adhering to

⁷¹ For a methodical description of the Anatolian roads in their historical development, cf. Sir Wm. Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*. Cf. also A. Philippson's *Das byzantinische Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 140 ff., where, a general survey of the Anatolian roads is given. A brief guide to the older English literature on the subject was appended by Baynes to Andréadès' article in *Byzantium* (ed. Baynes and Moss), 60, n. 2. Of the German monographs, especially those by Fr. Taeschner and W. Tomaschek must be mentioned; they have been utilized by Philippson.

⁷² On the "Roman Roads in Asia Minor," see Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 51 ff., 164 ff.; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, II, 1038 f., and, regarding some details, I, 26, 135, 174, 462, 525, II, 804 f., 867 ff.; *idem*, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (2nd ed.), I, 162.

In a way, so far as the ancient period is concerned, most of the older material has now been superseded by David Magie's monumental presentation of the *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ*. Cf. there, on the network of Roman roads in Anatolia in general, I, 39-42, and the exhaustive apparatus given in Vol. II, 786-802, notes 17-21. On the maintenance and repair of these roads see, e.g., I, 547, 570 f., 595, 620, 677, 694, 704, 719 f., and the notes thereto in Vol. II. For full survey consult Index, II, 1653, s.v. "Roads."

⁷³ Cf. Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, 43 ff., esp. 49, where all the stations between Ephesus and Melitene are enumerated.

the "Roman" road map, successively diverted the western sections of the Roman highways toward the northwestern corner of Asia Minor to make them converge on Constantinople, thus diminishing (though not cancelling) the importance of the westernmost, Roman-oriented extremities of the road system.⁷⁴ Additional highways intersecting Anatolia both horizontally (e.g., the northern route, paralleling the Black Sea shore) and diagonally (through Amorium and Ancyra)—a state necessity in the incessant struggle with Persians and Arabs⁷⁵—made the combined Romano-Byzantine network of well-maintained roads an invaluable agent in furthering Asia Minor's role in the political and economic life of the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, this network and its underlying policy outlived the Empire. Since the Ottoman sultans introduced no change in the political or administrative status of Constantinople, the city till modern times continued to be the hub of Anatolian roads. The Turkish road system of Asia Minor remained practically the same as that which the Muslim conquerors inherited from Byzantium.⁷⁶

LINKING THE COASTAL REGIONS

So much for the *main* goals of the Anatolian road system. But beside these and interdependent with them, there were, ever since antiquity, roads leading to and from seaports on the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. These ports were [as Sir William Ramsay observes] "employed in a lesser degree for the purpose of direct trade with the West. Tarsus was the port of Cilicia, Seleuceia for Cilicia Tracheia (which in later Roman and Byzantine time was called Isauria), Side and Attaleia for Pamphylia.... To each of these points [on the Mediterranean shore] roads converged, and they were points of departure for a coastal traffic." The same goes

⁷⁴ On the "Byzantine Roads," see Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, 74 ff. The transition from the Roman to the Byzantine road system was completed by the time of Justinian. Cf. *ibid.*, 75. However, modifications had to be introduced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, following the establishment of the Seljūk Sultanate in Iconium (Konya); *ibid.*, 77 ff. See also below, 107 f.

⁷⁵ On the "Byzantine Military Road," cf. Ramsay's *Historical Geography*, 97 ff.; Philippon, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 141.

⁷⁶ *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 26. In fact, this continuity assists us in reconstructing the Byzantine road system through actual field study. "No document [says Ramsay, *ibid.*, 74] has been preserved that attempts to give us a complete account of the Byzantine roads. We are reduced to piecing together scattered hints in the historians and interpreting them in accordance with the natural features of the country. We are aided by the fact that on the whole the Byzantine system continued in use throughout the Turkish domination."

for Cyzicus, Sinope, Amisus, and other harbors on the Anatolian shore of the Black Sea.⁷⁷

Now, these ports and the roads leading to them served, first and above all, as maritime outlets for the produce of the adjacent sections of the Anatolian mainland;⁷⁸ notwithstanding this qualification, their importance was by no means local, not even in Roman times. Already then a great part of that coastal traffic ultimately found its way to Rome.⁷⁹ This was performed not merely through direct maritime connections with the West but also through tributary land roads spanning the ports with the main trans-Anatolian highway. All along that highway, from Ephesus eastwards, lay important knots—such as Laodiceia, Apameia, Laodiceia Katakekaumene, Archelais Colonia, Caesareia—which gathered in and welded together roads coming in from all directions by tying them on to the central artery of East-to-West communication. Here, roads from the southern towns of Attaleia, Side, Iconium and Seleuceia, Tyana and Tarsus, were joined by roads passing through or originating in towns North of the great highway, such as Sardis, Dorylaeum and Amorium, Gangra (Germanicopolis) and Ancyra, etc.⁸⁰

This is, however, only the early chapter of the story. In time, when Rome was replaced by Constantinople as the attraction of Anatolian traffic, those South-to-North and South-to-Northwest roads, intersecting vertically and diagonally the horizontal East-to-West highway, had naturally become the main thoroughfares of the Empire. Via those roads, goods and manpower flowed into the capital from the Anatolian reservoir; via the same roads, conversely, the imperial center on the Bosphorus fed strength and governmental control into its eastern possessions. A glance at Ramsay's Index Map, clarifying the historical layers of the Anatolian road system, shows to what extent this originally less significant class of

⁷⁷ Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 58.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* So far as Roman times are concerned, "it is not probable [in the opinion of Ramsay] that Attaleia was used as a shipping port for any produce except that of the coastland of Pamphylia, or Seleuceia except for the Kalykadnos and other valleys that lead down to the Isaurian Sea . . . , and even Tarsus was probably not used as a port for any country except for the Cilician plain The mountain wall of Taurus prevented all heavy traffic from crossing the short lines between the plateau and the southern sea, and turned it along the road that led to the Aegean The same remark applies to Sinope . . . ; similarly it may be doubted whether Amisus was a harbor for more than the trade of the Pontic plains and the trade route from Armenia."

Ramsay justly called for more detailed studies of that coastal trade. Such studies must be made on the level of "local histories" of individual Anatolian districts.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

roads in Asia Minor was expanded under the Byzantines and raised to national importance.⁸¹

This *national* import of the Mediterranean (or Black Sea) harbors of Anatolia and of the coastal or coastbound routes connected with them was complemented in the Byzantine period by their growing *international* significance. Also the latter resulted from the geographical position of the said roads and shores; it was enhanced further by the revolutionary changes in the international make-up of the East Mediterranean basin ever since the Arab conquests.

Thus, in addition to their serving the East-to-West traffic in their aforecited capacity of transit depots and land-and-sea channels for the flow of men and goods from Asia Minor to the capital (irrespective of whether the capital be on the Tiber or the Bosphorus), the southern and northern ports and approaches of Anatolia played an increasingly pronounced role by the very virtue of their facing South and North, as the case may be. The role of the Black Sea harbors, reaching out for Khazaria and the Crimea and the regions beyond them, need not be expatiated upon in this connection. It is closely interwoven with the broader problem of commercial, cultural, political and religious relations between the Empire and her northern neighbors and as such it forms an integral part of the chapters devoted to that problem in any of the expositions of Byzantine history.⁸² On the other hand, the southern ports on the Pamphylian and Cilician coasts were for some time limited to service as naval bases *against* the opposite-lying Muslim shores of Egypt and North Africa. When, however, coesistence had finally been worked out, these ports turned into busy termini for Byzantine commercial intercourse *with* the Saracens.

ATTALEIA

A good illustration of the rise of the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor to national and international importance in the period under review is offered by the case of the Pamphylian port of Attaleia, in the Theme of the Cibyrrhaeots, and the roads leading to and from that port. This case reflects well the twin role of the southern coast's geographic position, both as link in the East-to-West traffic and as party to close relations with the opposite (Saracen) shore of the Mediterranean. The illustration

⁸¹ See the map facing p. 23 and preceding Ch. I of Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*.

⁸² On some of these northern approaches see below, 120 ff.

is the more useful, since—as we have seen already and as will become even more apparent presently—Attaleia occupies a privileged position in the documentary history of Byzantine Jewry and of Byzantine Karaism in particular: it is the site of the earliest-mentioned Karaite community on Byzantine soil.⁸³

To begin with the East-West role, not only was the aforementioned Roman tributary road, Attaleia-Laodiceia-Sardis, maintained by the Byzantine authorities, but it was extended farther North, to reach the Propontis and, thence, Constantinople. Moreover, a completely new shortcut was opened, connecting, in an almost straight South-to-North line through Sozopolis and Cotyaeum, the Mediterranean coast of Attaleia with Nicaea and Nicomedia. There, in that northwestern corner of the Anatolian Peninsula, all the routes converging on Constantinople merged into one great thoroughfare.⁸⁴ This short, and direct Attaleia-Nicaea route, and the longer, circuitous road from Attaleia through Sardis, truly became the lifeline of the Empire in the face of the irreparable developments which befell the inner sections of Asia Minor in the late eleventh and during the twelfth century: The Seljūq Turks, establishing their capital at Iconium, on the tributary road which comes from the South and joins the East-West highway at Laodiceia Katakekaumene, blocked the central links of the trans-Anatolian road system. Were it not for the only available detour through Attaleia, the Turks, who controlled the remaining main roads from the capital to Cilicia, would have succeeded in practically cutting off Cilicia and the southern shore of the Anatolian Peninsula from the Empire's nerve-center on the Bosphorus.⁸⁵ How vital

⁸³ Cf. above, 46 ff., our discussion of the Genizah epistle of 1028 C.E., which is, as we noted, the first record of the existence of Karaites in Attaleia and in Byzantium in general. For the economic importance of Attaleia, see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, Index, s.v. "Satalia." On the advantages of the city's geographic position cf. Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 155, and E. Banse, *Die Türkei: Eine moderne Geographie* (2nd ed.), esp. 160. For the early period cf. Esther V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon*, 164 f.; A.H.M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 130 f., 133 f., 145 (and the addendum on p. 557); and, finally, D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 260 f. (and note 4, on p. 1133), 280, 285, 288, 291, 620, 691. On the southern road see *ibid.*, 40 f., 265–77, and the notes thereto, on pp. 1137 ff. On the splendor of Byzantine Attaleia see Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine* [= *Le monde byzantin*, III], 131.

⁸⁴ On the Attaleia-Nicaea line see Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 141 f. Cf. also the map mentioned in note 81, above.

⁸⁵ Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 77 ff. Cf. also Galanté, *Les Juifs sous la domination des Turcs seldjoukides*, 4, and, for later times, 6. On the great changes in the thirteenth century see Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIIIe siècle*, 162 f.

this Attaleian bridge between North and South was to Byzantium can easily be gauged from the incessant efforts by the twelfth-century Comneni to keep—and, if needed, force—the way open to Cilicia through Sozopolis and Attaleia.⁸⁶ Finally, the ultimate seal of importance was attached to Attaleia in the institutional-administrative field, too: when all Pamphylia was *in partibus infidelium*, the city was made an archbishopric and remained the chief (later, the sole) seat of Christianity in the district.⁸⁷

But beside its role in the East-to-West traffic, Attaleia, at first a southern Byzantine sentinel against the inroads of Muslim naval forces, had become since the late tenth century a busy terminus and point of departure for peaceful commerce with the Egyptian shore. After the East Mediterranean waters had been cleared of Saracen forces, as result of the Byzantine reconquest of Crete and Cyprus,⁸⁸ and, especially, when a constructive mode of coexistence with the Fāṭimid Caliphate was reached in the time of Basil II,⁸⁹ the Attaleia-Alexandria maritime route became a busy thoroughfare of international commerce. The sporadic eruptions of piracy on that line, such as those of 1028 (which incidentally revealed to us the existence of Karaites in Attaleia),⁹⁰ no longer had the earmarks of the political struggle between Islām and Christianity. They belong to the regular class of high-sea robbery for the sake of profit which plagued maritime traffic everywhere all through the centuries. Their frequent recurrence on the Attaleia-Alexandria line is in itself a faithful testimony to the fact that the traffic there was busy and that business on that line seemed a promising proposition.⁹¹

TIES WITH "THE OLD COUNTRY"

These close commercial relations between Byzantine Asia Minor and the Saracen Near East explain also another phenomenon, one that is not purely a matter of economic consideration; it concerns the conti-

⁸⁶ For the action of Alexios I Comnenus see F. Chalandon, in *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, 344; Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 114 f. For the events under the reigns of John and Manuel see Chalandon, *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 353 f., 361, 367, 383; Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, 381, 389, 401.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ramsay, *op. cit.*, 420 (also 430, addendum to p. 104).

⁸⁸ See above, 88, note 4.

⁸⁹ Cf. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 311.

⁹⁰ See above, 46, and notes 54–55.

⁹¹ Cf. our comments above, 47, and in Chapter IV, below.

nance of practical and sentimental ties between the newcomers and the country they emigrated from. It is only natural that, with the above-described gravitation of eastern trader elements into Asia Minor in the wake of the tenth-century Byzantine renaissance, many of the merchants stemming from Islamic countries preferred to strike root on the Anatolian shore of the Mediterranean rather than in the central sections of the Peninsula.

Established on the southern coast of Asia Minor, they would reap all the advantages accruing from their integration in the Empire and her economy; at the same time, they could easily maintain from that coast the closest personal relations with the Islamic regions of near-by Syria or of the opposite (Egyptian) shore. For there, in the Arabic-speaking environment, was their home once, or the home of their fathers, prior to the latter's emigration to Byzantium; there, in the Muslim soil, were the roots of their culture; there, some of their kin were still living, sometimes acting even as business partners and assisting (or being assisted by) their Byzantine relatives in time of distress. This persistence of personal, social, cultural, economic and family ties with the "old country" must not be lost sight of when an attempt is made to evaluate the human geography of the eastern movement inland, into the new great promise of economic success, political stability and peace that was Byzantium. The implications of that phenomenon, so far as the cultural, communal, and even religious life of Byzantine Karaites is concerned, will, indeed, be discussed in several later sections of the present volume.

Guided by the above general findings on the origins, nature, direction, objectives and possibilities of the late tenth-century as well as the subsequent eastern migration movements into Byzantine Asia Minor, we are now better equipped for the tackling of the central theme of the present chapter: the settlement of Karaites in the region as part of that broader population flux. For, unfortunately, we possess neither a direct testimony as to the successive Karaite migration waves nor even the basic material that would make the listing of Karaite settlements in Byzantium approach any semblance of completeness. All we can do, indeed, is fall back on observation of the general trends and processes in which the Karaites participated; on actual references or hints to Karaite groupings, contained in the few texts we have, however accidental and indirect these references are; and on corresponding information about the already-existing local Rabbanite communities, alongside which the sectarian newcomers quite naturally tended to settle. These three sources, notwithstanding

their limitations, will perhaps offer, when welded together, a more or less plausible outline of the sect's settlement in the Byzantine Empire.

NATURE OF EXTANT SOURCES

Now, the accidental and indirect nature of the available texts—such as illustrated by the fact (discussed in Chapter I of the present study) that a *non-Karaitic* communal correspondence in *Egypt* revealed to us, for reasons of *internal* (Egyptian Jewish) consumption, the existence of *Karaites* in the aforesaid *Byzantine* port of Attaleia⁹²—is not limited to the *Karaites* alone. In the specific case just mentioned, for instance, the same and similar Egyptian Jewish documents serve as our major source on Attaleian *Rabbanites* as well.⁹³ Moreover, they constitute so far our only (and still dubious) information on a Rabbanite group in Pylae, on the Bithynian coast,⁹⁴ and form an important addition to our knowledge about the Rabbanite community in Mastaura on the Meander River, a significant station in the trans-Anatolian system, east of Ephesus.⁹⁵

⁹² Cf. above, 46 ff. The separate reference to Karaite captives from Attaleia, who were brought along with their Rabbanite compatriots for ransom in Alexandria, was designed to assure the participation of the wealthy Karaites of Fustāṭ, Tinnis, Damietta and Ṣahragt in the Egyptian Jewish fund-raising campaign. See *ibid.*, esp. 48, note 58.

⁹³ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 32, 73, and the texts on 186 (No. 128), 190 f. (No. 132), and 191 (No. 133).

⁹⁴ See the text in Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 344 f. The letter mentions five captives מארץ אסטרגילי (345, line 12), of which Mann says that it is "evidently a Byzantine locality which however I am unable to identify" (344, *Intro.*). Starr, who checked the photostatic copy of the said Genizah MS and reproduced it again in his *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 245 (App. B), noted that Mann's reading was faulty: the passage should read מארץ אסטרגילי. Cf. there, line 13 (the difference of one in the line-numbering resulted from the fact that Mann failed to count the illegible first line of the text). On the suggestion of Vasiliev, Starr interpreted the word as an Arabic corruption of the Greek εἰς τὰς Ἰλύλας. Cf. *op. cit.*, 32 and 186 (No. 128).

On Pylae, see Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 187, § 55. On the military road there, see *ibid.*, 210 f. § 25.

⁹⁵ Cf. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 92 f., reproducing a very damaged Genizah copy of an epistle sent by the community of Alexandria to הקהל הקדוש קהל הקהל השוכנים בארץ יון ... [מסט] ור[א]... (see also *ibid.*, I, 92 f.). An English version of the epistle is given by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 194 f. (No. 139). Cf. there also 32, 42 f. It is rather strange that Starr considers the letter as coming "presumably" from Alexandria (*op. cit.*, 195); line 11 of the text makes it quite clear that the epistle was written on behalf of [מגרינים] של מצר[א], whereas the name of Mastaura rather is in doubt (as evident from the passage cited at the beginning of the present note). Starr is right, however, in placing the correspondence sometime in the 40's of the eleventh century, when, after successive campaigns for the ransoming of captives, the local resources of the Egyptian community had been exhausted, and an appeal to the captives' home-community in the Empire seemed imperative.

For, alas, the twelfth-century Spanish Jewish traveler, whose tour of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern Jewish dispersion is our chief source for population data on Jewry living on the Greek mainland and the Aegean Islands (and an invaluable guide to the Karaite community in Constantinople as well), fails us completely with reference to Asia Minor. Not only did Benjamin of Tudela bypass the Anatolian Peninsula altogether, plying his way to Palestine through the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Cyprus (for which he gave us some extremely important data), but he did not even gather any hearsay information on the region, the way he did regarding several other places which he could not visit personally.

In brief: the roundabout manner by which the student of Karaism must endeavor to reconstruct the map of Karaite settlements on Byzantine soil will by no means seem unusual to one initiated into the perplexities of Byzantine Jewish history in general. In fact, the list of Asia Minor's Rabbanite communities, too, could be compiled only by a similarly precarious method. A survey of the source material pertaining to these communities between the seventh and twelfth centuries shows how utterly accidental, how exasperatingly vague, indeed, how absurdly incomplete this material is.⁹⁶

RABBANITE COMMUNITIES IN ASIA MINOR

To begin with, we have so far no word at all concerning Jews living in the Middle Byzantine period in cities like Tarsus, Trebizond, Smyrna, Amaseia, Laodiceia, Apameia, Magnesia, Caesareia—to mention but a few of the more known place-names from among the scores of localities which figure in the map of Jewish settlements both in ancient Roman and in later Turkish times.⁹⁷ There is, after all, little basis to assume a total

⁹⁶ This absurd situation is well illustrated by Isidore Lévy's article on "Asia Minor" in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, II, 211b–213b. After devoting three full columns to ancient times, Lévy, admitting that "information concerning events later than this [ancient] period is very scarce," disposes of the period from Heraclius to the advent of the Ottoman Turks in exactly three sentences. In contrast to the early section and to the later (likewise too brief) description of Turkish times, not a single place-name is given for the Middle and Late Byzantine periods.

⁹⁷ For the Roman period, see the data collected by Juster, in *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain*. It is to be hoped that the projected English edition of the book will bring also the list of Anatolian Jewish communities up to date. For the communities under Turkish domination, cf. Galanté's *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, of which Vol. I is wholly devoted to Smyrna, while Vol. II deals with all other communities. There also, II, 349 ff., a list of the localities is given, along with a double map, showing both ancient and Turkish place-names. Cf. further Galanté's *Appendice à l'Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, and his brief *Les Juifs sous la domination des Turcs seldjoukides*.

break of continuity in all these communities under the Byzantines; nor is there any reason to suppose a sudden disappearance of the geographical and economic factors which had justified the settlement of Jews there in the first place. On the other hand, the few data which did somehow enter the historical register, and which in most cases are our only available information about certain Rabbanite communities in Asia Minor in the Byzantine period, are often almost ridiculously unrelated to the basic problems which the historian, conscious of the economic and topographical features of the locality involved, would like to find an answer to.

The list is too short to bother with selecting illustrations, as all the cases could easily be discussed in a page or two. Thus, it is from a chance remark of a Christian hagiographer that we glean our one and only reference to Jews in eleventh-century Ephesus. The author, to be sure, gives no hint as to the economic function or the numerical strength of the Jews in that great Aegean terminus of the trans-Anatolian highway. The existence of a Jewish population there is disclosed merely through the hagiographer's boast that even Jews used to climb to the mountain-monastery of Ephesus in order to see the celebrated stylite Lazarus.⁹⁸

Another anonymous hagiographer revealed to us the existence of a Jewish community at Synnada, a commercial center in Phrygia, by admitting that the saint who was the object of his *Vita* was a Synnada-born Jewish convert to Christianity.⁹⁹ The same writer serves as our only evidence of a Jewish community in Nicaea. Here again, the existence of Jews in that important political, ecclesiastical and commercial center of Bithynia, which formed the natural coastal terminus of several roads

⁹⁸ Cf. Starr's excerpt in English from the *Life of Lazarus* by Gregorios, in *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 196 f. (No. 141). See also his general comments there, 48. An earlier information on the Jews of Ephesus belongs to pre-Heraclian times.

⁹⁹ Cf. Starr's English version of the passage from an anonymous tenth-century biography of the monk Constantine, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 119 ff. (No. 54), and his comments there, 45. Since the hagiographer relied on oral monastic tradition—he did not know the monk personally—his narrative is, as Starr correctly stresses, of dubious value.

On Synnada see the numerous entries in Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*; cf. Index, *s.v.* Lying on the tributary road from Amorium which joins the Eastern Trade Route at Apameia, Synnada was even in Roman times "sufficiently near the trade route to retain its importance after that route became the great artery of communication across the country" (Ramsay, 43). It grew, of course, in significance with the rise of the Amorium road to national importance. On the "Synnadic" marble see Ramsay, 54, 135, 433 f.; Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 50, 132, 568. This was actually Docimian marble; it took on the name of Synnada because of being exported via the Synnada road which, as we said, joined the main highway.

traversing the Peninsula from all directions, is quite incidentally revealed by the author's matter-of-fact statement that Nicaean Jewry planned to assail the saint he was writing about. It is, indeed, to the credit of that tenth-century hagiographer that, while obviously interested in the religious story alone, he had the sense to remark in passing that these "Hebrews dwelt there [i.e., in Nicaea] for the sake of its trade and its other advantages."¹⁰⁰

The references in the historical literature are equally casual and no less a pure matter of chance. A completely "non-Jewish" story—a chronicler's report of the blinding of Romanus IV Diogenes in Cotyaeum—is our sole testimony of Jewish settlement in that first-class station on the main Byzantine cross-country route from Attaleia to Nicaea: the chronicler disclosed that the agents of Michael VII drafted a local Jew for the purpose of maiming the deposed emperor.¹⁰¹ Likewise, the insinuations of biased chroniclers against Michael II, since the latter "hailed from an upper Phrygian town called Amorium in which a large number of Jews and Athinganoi had always lived together," turn, for lack of better evidence, into our chief proof of a considerable Jewish population in Amorium in the ninth century.¹⁰² In the same class belongs also our information on Jews in another Phrygian town, the important military fortress of Khonai; it reaches us through a report on the anti-Jewish animus of the local bishop.¹⁰³ Finally, the imperial assignment to Hagia

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the above excerpt (No. 54) in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 121. For an earlier assertion (about 800), whatever its worth, that Nicaea was inhabited by pagans and Jews, see Starr's reference there, 122.

¹⁰¹ Cf. the passage from Michael Attaleiates' *Historia*, in Starr's translation, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 202 (No. 149), and earlier, 22 f., where the problem of Jewish executioners is briefly discussed. (For later times, see Starr's *Romania*, Index, s.v. "Executioner, Jewish.")

For Cotyaeum, "the largest and richest city" of Phrygia Salutaris, and for its tremendous military importance as a communication link in the period under review, see Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, Index, s.v. There also, 94, 436, Cotyaeum's unique position is stressed as a well-known Phrygian center of heresy (next to Amorium; on the latter, see next note).

¹⁰² Cf. the passage from Theophanes Continuatus and later Byzantine chroniclers, as translated by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 98 f. (No. 20). On the Athinganoi, see Starr's "An Eastern Christian Sect: the Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review*, XXIX (1936), 93 ff.; *idem*, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 47 f. The degree of truth in the assertions concerning Jewish, real or alleged, influence on Christian heresies in Phrygia is, of course, entirely irrelevant to our inquiry.

¹⁰³ Cf. Michael Khoniates' "Eulogy over Nikétas of Khonai," as excerpted and translated by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 224 f. (No. 176), and Starr's comments there, 19, 29. If we are to believe the chronicler, the Khonai Jews "were ejected from their residences" and driven into the degrading occupation of tanning by the twelfth-century archbishop of Khonai, Nikétas, who "abhorred the Jews" and "would never

Sophia of taxes due from Strobiliote Jews is our only indication of the sojourn of Jews in Strobilos. The text, however, speaking of Strobiliote Jews "wherever found" (*πανταχοῦ ἐδρισκόμενοι*), leaves some doubt whether the Jewish population in the city formed a permanent settlement. Nor are we even sure which of the many Byzantine localities bearing the name "Strobilos" is meant; it stands to reason though, that the harbor on the Lycian coast was probably intended by the imperial lawmaker.¹⁰⁴

LESSON OF RABBANITE SETTLEMENT

This, then—beside the above-cited Egyptian Jewish correspondence mentioning Pylae, Attaleia, and Mastaura, and beside three legal documents originating in the two cities enumerated last¹⁰⁵—is the sum total of the available material pertaining to Rabbanite Jews in Asia Minor! It covers some six hundred years or so, from the critical days of Arab wars in the seventh century until the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204.¹⁰⁶ Here also is, for all to see, the method by which the specific information concerning individual Rabbanite settlements was arrived at.

Nevertheless, meager and sometimes questionable though they are, these data add up to a picture of considerable significance. In fact, their sporadic and incomplete quality notwithstanding, they permit a far-reaching conclusion to be drawn with regard to the trend characterizing Jewish settlement in Asia Minor in Byzantine times. *This trend shows,*

permit them to dwell in his diocese." Until then, one may conclude, they participated in the city's commerce. On the other hand, however, their history there could hardly begin before the tenth century. Khonai turns into "one of the chief military centers" of the Empire only in the late period, and "it becomes known to us first in the tenth century . . . , when the military importance of the rock of Khonai makes it a center for the wars of the period." Cf. Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 429, and the numerous references listed there in the Index, *s.v.*

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the passage in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 228 (No. 181), and his comments there, 15, and in his *Romania*, 112 (in connection with the problem of taxation).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the two legal texts concerning a twelfth-century civil case in Attaleia, in which a Jewish convert to Christianity sued Attaleian Jews for seizure of his father's home; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 219 (No. 167) and 221 f. (No. 171), and the references there. Cf. also Starr's comments on pp. 20, 27, 42.

The document from Mastaura is a Hebrew marriage-contract of 1022 C.E., published by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 94 ff. (cf. I, 93 f.), and reproduced in English by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 187 ff. (No. 130). Cf. there also, 27, 45 f.

¹⁰⁶ We hear also in 1096 of Jews gathered in the coastal city of Abydos in expectation of messianic miracles. Cf. the text in Mann's "Messianic Movements in the Time of the Early Crusades" (Hebrew), *Hattekūfah*, XXIII (1924), 253 ff.; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 203 ff. (No. 153), and his comments on pp. 41, 74. It seems, however, that these Jews came from other communities on their way to Palestine.

with no exceptions, a persistent gravitation of the Jewish settler to the coastal cities—Ephesus, Attaleia, Nicaea, Pylae, Strobilos—and to inland towns which served as hubs or objectives of military and commercial traffic, such as Synnada, Khonai, Amorium, Cotyaeum, Mastaura.¹⁰⁷ It is, therefore, legitimate to presuppose, even though no additional documents are as yet available, the existence of Jewish groupings in many more ports and commercial cities of Asia Minor at different periods of Byzantine history and, especially, following the Empire's territorial expansion in the late tenth century.^{107a}

¹⁰⁷ On this general trend see our conclusions below, 181 f. There is, however, some merit to Starr's cautious remark that "even if a large proportion of the Jewish population actually resided in the less important places, the sources would still probably refer more frequently to those in the larger towns." To be sure, Starr, too, is impressed by "the fact that the Jews are mentioned chiefly in the larger towns and in the cities of some commercial importance." Cf. his *The Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 30.

^{107a} While the preceding pages were in print, the latest (July, 1958) issue of *Tarbiz*, XXVII, has reached me. There, "A Letter of Historical Importance from Seleuceia (Selefke), Cilicia, Dated 21 July 1137" is published by S.D. Goitein, in continuation of his recent revelations from the Cairo Arabic Genizah pertaining to the period of the Crusades. Cf. there the Judeo-Arabic text (with facsimile) and the Hebrew translation and apparatus, 528-35, as well as Professor Goitein's Introduction (in Hebrew), 521-27. A brief résumé in English is also given.

The document—our first and only information on the Jewish community of Seleuceia, on the Mediterranean (Isaurian) shore of Asia Minor—admirably confirms each and all points of the thesis suggested in this and other chapters of the present book. As it becomes evident from the correspondence, the Seleuceia Jewry is an immigrant community. Even as late as 1137, with Seljūks and Crusaders harassing normal communications, the immigrants feel that their newly adopted country is safe, prosperous and economically promising, and they call their kin to follow in their footsteps and immigrate. Also the direction of that migration fully accords with the twin tendency of other immigrant groups, as described in the present survey. To some, Seleuceia serves as a transit station and stepping-stone for further movement inland, to Constantinople. The others prefer to stay on the coast, in close touch with their former compatriots on the Muslim shore. The immigrants appear to have soon integrated in the Byzantine environment and in the Byzantine economy. Yet, they still are culturally, linguistically, emotionally, and through family ties connected with their native Egypt.

"Our letter [says Goitein] constitutes thus an interesting testimony of an important demographic fact in the history of the Jewish people: the immigration from Islamic countries into Byzantium." Referring to my own preliminary publications concerning such migration movement, Professor Goitein states: "We have been able to assume such a movement on the basis of *literary* sources. Now we are faced with *documentary* evidence to this effect. From it, incidentally, we also gather that the immigrants brought along with them a higher culture, both general and Jewish." Cf. *ibid.*, 524. Goitein's text is the more interesting, since it stems from the actual newcomers. Our literary sources, on the other hand, belong already to the Byzantine-born sons and grandsons of the eastern immigrants.

It is to be hoped that many more documents of this sort will come to light through Goitein's fruitful studies of the treasures still hidden among the Hebrew and Arabic leaves of the Cairo Genizah.

In the light of the above, the importance of the data, to be assembled presently, on the settlement of Karaites in Asia Minor goes beyond the limited framework of Karaite history proper. These data may, indeed, prove a welcome (though modest) contribution to the *broader* story of that economic and demographic transformation of the region which resulted from the shift of imperial frontiers eastwards. More than this, they actually complement our knowledge of the *general* Jewish settlement in the Anatolian Peninsula in the time under review. Not only was the very appearance of the Karaites within the boundaries of the Empire a corollary of the wider "movement inland," but also the direction of their advance, as we shall see presently, corresponded to the overall Jewish trend defined above. In fact, that trend, so far as manifested by the Karaites and their Rabbanite fellow immigrants, may have even surpassed in intensity the commercial and urbanistic tendency of the Rabbanite old-timers. The latter were more independent of the ups and downs of international commerce owing to their long-established, diversified socio-economic structure. Hence, they would sometimes persist in their old—once prosperous, yet now declining—abode. Newcomers to the country, on the other hand, the Karaite groups consisted almost exclusively of merchants.¹⁰⁸ They were unhampered by previous tradition, inertia or sentiment, and tended quite naturally to move into those ports and commercial centers in which, *at the very time of their immigration*, traffic with their "old country" was busiest.¹⁰⁹

To sum up: Two general rules may, I believe, be ventured with a fair degree of confidence regarding the relationship between the respective data on Rabbanite and Karaite settlements in Byzantium.

a) Since immigration would flow, as a matter of course, into places containing already an indigenous Jewish (hence Rabbanite) population, *reference to a Karaite community alone serves ipso facto as testimony of the simultaneous existence of a Rabbanite community also in the given locality, notwithstanding the absence of any other evidence referring specifically to Rabbanites*. Thus, our data on Karaite groups complement the available list of Byzantine Jewish communities at large.

b) *The appearance of Karaite groups in certain localities or regions of the Byzantine territory in the late tenth, the eleventh, and later centuries, is a fairly sensitive meter for gauging the intensity of the all-Jewish com-*

¹⁰⁸ Cf. below, 169 f.

¹⁰⁹ For other, esp. cultural and linguistic, implications of that more extreme Karaite gravitation to the larger cities, see our comments below, 182 (and note 54), 194 f.

mercial endeavor in the Empire. It indicates that precisely those localities served at that time as foci of Jewish commercial activity and extended the most promising prospects for the immigrants' initiative both in the economic and communal field. (This rule applies to the Rabbanite immigrant groups as well; the latter, however, failed to go on record, for they soon merged with the existing local Rabbanite community.)^{109a}

ON THE SOUTHERN SHORES

The greatest prospects presented themselves, of course, along the southern coast of Asia Minor. Here for the Jewish merchant was an obvious spring-board for commercial intercourse with Egypt and her wealthy Rabbanite and Karaite communities. Thus it is not surprising that precisely Attaleia, the already-discussed Byzantine naval base facing the Land of the Nile, yielded information about the existence of a Karaite community there alongside a Rabbanite settlement.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Attaleia formed one political-economic unit with the recovered island of Cyprus, which lay in the direct path of commerce between Asia Minor and Egypt.¹¹¹ It cannot, then, be accidental that precisely also on Cyprus we find a Karaite community. This community was numerically strong enough to be recorded in the twelfth century by Benjamin of Tudela on his travels through the Mediterranean areas.¹¹² Culturally it was sufficiently active to have caused the eleventh-century leader of Byzantine Karaism, Tobias ben Moses, to indulge in vehement polemics with its neighbors, the adherents of the Mishawite Jewish sect.¹¹³ Of course, the Cypriot Karaites may have settled on the island

^{109a} See, however, the new text published by Goitein (and mentioned in note 107a, above), showing a stage in which that merger has not yet been effected.

¹¹⁰ For the Jewish community of Attaleia see the references above, 47, note 56.

¹¹¹ A seal of Leon, the "commerciarius of Cyprus and Attaleia," was found in Nicosia, Cyprus. Cf. the description of the seal by Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 474 f. For another manifestation of this close political-economic relation between Attaleia and Cyprus, cf. Bar-Hebraeus, 362, and Starr, *Romania*, 101 f. On Attaleia's close ties with Egypt and Cyprus, and with the East as a whole, notwithstanding the later general decline of Asia Minor, see P. Birot and J. Dresch, *La Méditerranée et le Moyen Orient*, II, 168.

¹¹² See Benjamin's *Itinerary*, ed. L. Grünhut and M.N. Adler, Hebrew Section, 23, German tr., 20. The reading in the Asher edition of the work (Hebrew Section, 25, Eng. tr., 57)—וּשְׁם יְהוּדִים רַבָּנִים וְקָבוּץ עוֹרֵד יֵשׁ שֵׁם יְהוּדִים מִיָּגוֹן בְּפָרוּסִין וְהֵם אֶפְיָקוֹרִסִין—makes no sense. Grünhut-Adler read correctly וְקָרָאִים for the obviously corrupt וְקָבוּץ. For the other "heretics" mentioned in the text see next note.

¹¹³ For Karaite-Mishawite relations see the story below, Chapter VIII. On the Mishawite sect in general, cf. my *Mishawiyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*.

prior to the Byzantine reconquest, and may possibly have originated from Egypt.¹¹⁴

At any rate, the sea trade on the Attaleia-Cyprus-Alexandria axis was by now an established fact. It compensated, in a way, the Rabbanite and Karaite intermediaries of international commerce for the overland route which they had used previously. Surely, the military-economic expansion of the Italian maritime republics could not have been foreseen at that time. This expansion, together with the added nuisance of Muslim piratical outrages, was ultimately to chase the Jewish merchant out of the high seas.¹¹⁵ Indeed, it was to play havoc with the entire Byzantine economy and contribute substantially to the Empire's final collapse.¹¹⁶

THE PONTIC TIER

The lively commerce along the routes traversing and intersecting the northern region of Asia Minor attracted, since time immemorial, numerous merchants from the East, including Jews. Here were roads leading to and beyond the traffic termini on the Black Sea shore proper. Here ran the northern belt-route from Nicomedia to Amaseia, branching off successively to reach out for the coastal towns of Sinope and Amisus in the North, for Gangra (=Germanicopolis), Ancyra, etc., South of the thoroughfare, and for the Trebizond harbor and the Armenian

¹¹⁴ Cyprus was one of the first provinces of the Empire to fall into the hands of the Muslims (in 647). For a brief résumé of the island's history until its ultimate reconquest by the Byzantines in the period under discussion, see Schlumberger, *Nicephore Phocas*, 473 f., and, most recently, the chapter on "Byzantium and Islâm" in Sir George Hill's *History of Cyprus*, I, 257 ff., esp. 295. Cf. also A. Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 164 ff. On the island's Jewish community cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, Index, s.v., and the special chapter in his *Romania*, 101 ff.

¹¹⁵ Cf. S. W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), IV, 186; Lopez, in the aforementioned paper in *Relazioni* (X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche), III, 155.

¹¹⁶ See Ch. Diehl, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 116 ff.; *idem*, *Byzance—grandeur et décadence*, 214 ff.

The story of the relationship between Byzantium and the Italian republics, particularly Venice, forms an integral part of the history of the decline and fall of the Empire. Runciman has summed up the problem with admirable simplicity: "Her [i.e., Byzantium's] history is fundamentally the history of her financial policy and of the commerce of the Middle Ages" (*Byzantine Civilization*, 163). And further, 178: "The tragedy of the long death of Byzantium is above all a financial tragedy." No history of any segment of Byzantine population would be complete without taking in consideration the tremendous economic changes which the Empire and the region as a whole have undergone precisely in the period dealt with in the present volume.

road network in the East.¹¹⁷ In addition, drawing a sweeping half-pincer movement in the southeastern direction, the highway closed in from Amaseia, through Sebasteia, on Melitene, thus blending into the already-discussed central trans-Anatolian system and its southern ramifications. A huge loop it was, enclosing in a broad circle the whole Peninsula.¹¹⁸

Important commercially and militarily in periods of affluence and of the Empire's eastward expansion, the northern belt-route became even more vital since the end of the eleventh century. Here was a way of skirting the Konya Sultanate which, as already noted, spread out through the heartland of Anatolia and brought to a virtual standstill the cross-country communication with the imperial capital via the central and southern links of the Anatolian road system.¹¹⁹ By crossing the Halys River in the North, one still could span East and West through Gangra, on the boundary between the Empire of the Comneni and the Seljūk territory.¹²⁰ Moreover, a four-to-five-day voyage by sail, at a favorable wind, would link Trebizond by sea with Péra on the Golden Horn, where the greater part of Constantinopolitan Jewry (Karaites included) was concentrated.¹²¹ These land and sea facilities made business with both the southeastern corner of the Black Sea and the opposite-lying coast of the Crimea an uninterruptedly going proposition, whatever the political fortunes of the rest of the Peninsula.

That Jews participated in the economic activity of the region, both in transit and as permanent settlers, may be taken for granted.¹²² Unfortu-

¹¹⁷ See Ramsay's analysis of the coastal road (from the Bosphorus along the Asiatic shore of the Black Sea) and of the other highway from Nicomedia to Gangra and Amaseia, as mapped on the Peutinger Table; *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 64 ff. The Nicomedia-Amaseia road, "the most important route in the North of Asia Minor" (Ramsay, 64), was a direct axis, but it formed also a small loop to the South, through Gangra, thus gathering in the Ancyra traffic. Cf. Ramsay, 54, note*, and his Index Map, facing p. 23.

¹¹⁸ A clear picture of the great loop can be gained from Ramsay's Index Map, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, facing p. 23.

¹¹⁹ See above, 109.

¹²⁰ Cf. the map of "The Empire of the Comneni" in *Cambridge Med. History*, VIII (Atlas), Map No. 42.

¹²¹ Cf. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIIIe siècle*, 157. On the Karaite center in Péra, cf. below, 145 ff.

¹²² On the Jews in the Black Sea commerce in ancient times, see briefly Bratianu, *op. cit.*, 28. De Goeje presupposed Jewish participation in the Trebizond trade about the tenth century, although the sources proper mention only Greek, Armenian, and Muslim merchants there. Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 112 (No. 45n., end). See also below, note 124.

nately, even more perhaps than with other sections of Anatolia, the by now familiar state of affairs in the field of Byzantine Jewish documentation repeats itself here with exasperating uniformity. It resembles an awkward three-story structure, the middle floor of which, existing by the sheer dictate of architectural logic, remains almost utterly faceless and void of specific content. The historical reminiscences of Jewish settlement in the area in ancient times are followed by reports on Jews and Jewish life under the Turkish regime, while a heavy layer of silence characterizes the many centuries in-between, during the so-called Middle and Late Byzantine periods.

In vain will the student of Byzantine Jewish history search for place-names like Amaseia or Gangra among the *regesta* laboriously assembled by Starr in his presentation of the period ending with the Fourth Crusade,¹²³ or in his brief survey of *Romania: The Jewries of the Levant After the Fourth Crusade*. If Trebizond, say, was given the distinction of being included in the Index to the former book, this distinction is simply based on negation. It was brought about by Starr's inevitable statement that the name of Trebizond is "conspicuous by its absence" in the sources dealing with Byzantine Jewry.¹²⁴ The other sites have not been honored even by a negative mention.

TREBIZOND

Karaite references to some of the above-mentioned localities, however vague and sometimes of dubious authenticity, are our only written clues to Jewish settlements in general in the Pontic area under Byzantine rule. From the standpoint of Karaite history, of course, the existence of sectarian groupings there is especially important as link and stepping-stone to the settlement of Karaites in the Crimea and Eastern Europe. This problem will be discussed at greater length in a future volume which is to deal with the period subsequent to that covered by the present inquiry and with a geographical area broader than Byzantium.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Jews in Byz. Empire, 641-1204*. True, Krauss (*Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 82, note 3), mentions Amaseia; yet he has some doubts, since "statt Amaseia kann aber auch Amisus (gleichfalls im Pontos) vermutet werden." Thus, both Amaseia and Amisus appear in the Index. The text, however, does not belong into the period covered by the present volume. On Jews in Amisus in Roman times, see Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain*, 1, 194, note 7.

¹²⁴ *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 30. To be sure, this page-number does not appear in the Index of the book. Only the comment on p. 112 (quoted above, note 122), regarding the absence of any mention of Jews in the documents describing the tenth-century Trebizond trade, is registered in the Index.

¹²⁵ Cf. above, 60, note 11, and 65, note 23.

However, over and above their intrinsic significance for the tracing of the expansion of the sect proper, the texts, revealing the appearance of Karaite colonies at key-points of Northern Asia Minor and adjoining areas, constitute a *general* testimony of the first rank. In consonance with the two basic rules set out above,¹²⁶ they serve as confirmation of both the simultaneous existence of Rabbanite communities in the said localities and the intensive economic activity pursued by these communities at the time under review.

To be sure, we derive little assistance from Karaite literature with regard to the Jewry of Amaseia in the Byzantine period; the city had already fallen in 1075, i.e., during the early formative years of Byzantine Karaism, under Turkish dominion.¹²⁷ Our earliest literary mention of Karaites in Amaseia belongs to the Ottoman period (the sixteenth century),¹²⁸ when also testimonies regarding the Rabbanite community in the city are available.¹²⁹ But it is possible that we have at our disposal a document attesting to the existence of a Karaite community in Trebizond not later than the second half of the twelfth century. The document in question is a colophon inscribed in 1188 by a Constantinople-born donor on a Bible scroll ("the Twenty-four Books") which he purchased from the community of Trebizond. The donor, Daniel bar Nathan "the Constantinopolitan," donated the scroll to a Crimean (?) community.¹³⁰

Now, the colophon just cited—if at all authentic,¹³¹ and if the form *Ṭirapzīn* included in it refers indeed to Trebizond (Trabzon)—affords us a glimpse into several aspects of the state of Pontic Karaism, and Pontic Jewry at large, in the Middle Byzantine period. First of all, of course, it lends proof of the existence itself of Karaites (and, *ipso facto*,

¹²⁶ See above, 118 f.

¹²⁷ On that city in general, see the brief sketch in *Enşiklopedyah 'Ivrith* (Enc. Hebraica), IV, 120 f.

¹²⁸ Cf. the text excerpted by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1428, note 97a. The text refers to the sufferings of Karaites and Rabbanites alike in Amaseia, about 1545 C.E., following a blood libel. See on that event, without reference to the Karaites, Rosanes, *Ḳōroth hay-Yehūdīm be-Turkiyyah we-Arsoth haḲ-Ḳedem*, II, 56, 283 ff. (Note III).

¹²⁹ On the Jews in Amaseia in the Ottoman period, see the sketch by Rosanes (in German), *Enc. Judaica*, II, 562; Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 285 ff.

¹³⁰ Cf. the text published by Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 136, No. 88: בשם אל שדי אל כ"ד ספרים בתכריך הדר מקנת כסף שלי דניאל בר נתן קוטטנדיני ג"ע קניתם [צ"ל: קנייתם] בקהל אחינו קהל סירפזין והקדשתים לקהל יהוד גורייל בשנת אח"ק לשט' [רת]. It is, of course, apparent that Daniel himself was already an inhabitant of יהוד גורייל. Possibly, though not necessarily, the agnomen *Ḳōstandīni* refers solely to his deceased father. This does not change in any way the conclusions drawn further in this discussion. See again on it, below, 124, note 135.

¹³¹ See below, 125, and note 137.

also of Rabbanites) in Trebizond.¹³² It further presents the local Karaites as an organized *ḳahal*, i.e., an institutionally defined community.¹³³ The impression is gained that the group was well-provided culturally and materially, so that a Karaite was sure to be able to procure in Trebizond a Bible scroll and a luxuriously ornamented mantle (*takhrīkh hadar*) for it, too. Whether the manuscript was purchased (*miḳnath kesef*) from a private family, or a dealer, or through arrangement with a scribe, its very availability for sale shows, in all events, a considerable amount of cultural resources, of literacy and perhaps even learning.

That Trebizond itself attracted Jews from Constantinople should not be surprising in view of its famous fairs and busy harbor.¹³⁴ It is, nevertheless, of importance to note that the place served also as a transit station for further journeys (or voyages) to the young Karaite communities in the northern expanses of the Black Sea basin. To Daniel bar Nathan, for instance, who apparently settled among an unidentified Karaite group further to the North, the "community of our brethren the *ḳahal* of Ṭirapzīn" was the self-evident source for supplying the religious needs of his young community, notwithstanding his father's (and perhaps even his own) provenance from Constantinople.¹³⁵

All in all, the Trebizond community is referred to in the colophon in a matter-of-fact manner, as a well-established Karaite center, bridging the Byzantine shore of the Black Sea with the vis-à-vis regions. Hence, it is perfectly safe to suppose that the actual establishment of that community well preceded the year 1188, when an accidental transaction

¹³² It is obvious that the donor himself is not an inhabitant of Trebizond. He speaks of the members of the community in that city as "our brethren."

¹³³ Note the expression: קהל אחינו קהל טירפזין.

¹³⁴ On the fairs of Trebizond, see Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire*, 38; Vasiliev, "Byzantium and Islām," in *Byzantium* (ed. Baynes-Moss), 314. See further, Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 29 f. and note 3; Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine [Le monde byzantin, III]*, 131 ff.; Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 153 (on the Trebizond route); and, in general, Banse, *Die Türkei: eine moderne Geographie* (2nd ed.), esp. 92 f. On the Péra-Trebizond traffic, see Bratianu, *op. cit.*, 113; on the later history and decline of the city, *ibid.*, 168 ff.

Galanté, too (*Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 272), assumes that "vu son importance commerciale . . . , cette ville aurait dû avoir, à diverses époques, des colonies juives."

¹³⁵ Cf. above, note 130. Chances are that Daniel bar Nathan did not settle permanently in יתרו גוריייל, and was actually a "Constantinopolitan." If this should prove correct, it would mean that the Karaite community of Trebizond was well known even in the capital for its cultural resources. A Constantinopolitan Karaite, willing to make a gift of Holy Books to a community in the North, would evidently consider it unnecessary to transport such objects all the way from the West. He knew he would find them in Trebizond.

brought about the accidental mention of the Karaites of Trebizond in an accidentally preserved inscription.

It is only fair to add that our colophon forms part of a group of inscriptions belonging to the Firkowicz Collection. This author, for one, does not think that, as such, the material is *a priori* under suspicion.¹³⁶ Neither the date of the colophon nor its content are apt to raise any special difficulty or reservation (except, perhaps, for the name of the recipient community). Of course, like all other texts which have passed through the hands of Firkowicz, the present document, too, would have benefited greatly from the corroborating evidence of an independent source. Needless to say, however, such evidence is unavailable in the general poverty of sources with which the student is confronted in this field. Considering, then, this paucity of documentation, a rejection of the Trebizond colophon would seem, indeed, an exaggerated example of scholarly caution which simply cannot be afforded.¹³⁷

GAGRY—GANGRA

Another dated inscription, one that leaves no room for suspicion whatsoever, allows us to perceive the existence of a Karaite community in a still other area of the Pontic region. It is a colophon composed by a Karaite scribe in 1207 on completing a copy of the treatise *'Adath Debōrim*, dealing with Hebrew grammar and Massorah.¹³⁸ The religious allegiance of the author of the book, the twelfth-century Joseph "the Constantinopolitan," is still debatable.¹³⁹ There is, however, no doubt as to the Karaite denomination of the scribe, Yehūdah ben Jacob.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ See my comments above, 60.

¹³⁷ Offering the collection of inscriptions for publication, Neubauer refrained from taking a stand in the matter of their authenticity. "Ich habe alle diese Inschriften dem Leser vorgelegt [says Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 33], ohne mich mit Bestimmtheit über die Echtheit derselben aussprechen zu können." Some of these inscriptions are, indeed, quite suspect. The present text seems to me, nevertheless, fairly reliable.

¹³⁸ On the massoretic compilation *'Adath Debōrim* see Harkavy, *Ḥadashim gam Yeshanim*, No. 1, p. 3, and the extracts in No. 2, 11–13. Cf. further the details and bibliography in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 240 f. (No. 193); Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 291 (and notes).

¹³⁹ Poznański ("Nachtrag zu den karäischen Kopisten und Besitzern von Handschriften," *ZfHB*, XX [1917], 80, §3) considers Joseph Kōstandīnī a Rabbanite. Mann, on the other hand (*Texts and Studies*, II, 291), calls Joseph "a learned Karaite scholar in grammar and Massorah of Constantinople." Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 241, seems to have overlooked this position of Mann.

¹⁴⁰ Poznański (*loc. cit.*) has made the interesting observation that the date of the completion of the copy, as noted by the scribe, was "Tuesday, the 20th of the month

Hence, the obvious conclusion may be drawn that there existed a Karaite community in the scribe's hometown at the very beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁴¹ In fact, the availability of a copyist there and the need of (and interest in) books of the kind of 'Adath Debōrim show a rather advanced stage of cultural and religious activity, and may allow us to move back the date of the establishment of the Karaite settlement in the city to the twelfth century, if not earlier.

The only problem posed by the document at our disposal is that of identifying the locality in which the scribe was active. The Hebrew spelling of the place-name consists of four consonants: *Gimal-Gimal-Rēsh-Aleph*, which should read *Gagrā*.¹⁴² That this was the standard spelling is evident from the colophon inscribed on a manuscript copy of Psalms and Job by another native of that city.¹⁴³ While the date of the other inscription (929) seems rather questionable—again, the document belongs to the Firkowicz Collection¹⁴⁴—there is surely no quarrel with the spelling there.

Scholars have identified the city with *Gagri* (or, better, *Gagry*), "on the eastern shore of the Black Sea."¹⁴⁵ By that, I take it, the coastal town in Georgia (Abkhazia) is meant. If this identification be correct, we shall have discovered another link between the Pontic Karaite communities on the Byzantine shore and the rising Karaite groups on the northern coast of the Black Sea. The Karaite expansion, this goes without saying, spread not only directly, across the waters, from Péra

of *Sīwan*;" according to the precalculated Rabbanite calendar, the 20th day of *Sīwan* cannot fall on a Tuesday. Undoubtedly, the scribe used a Karaite calendar.

In addition to the above, also the nomenclature used by the scribe in his colophon is characteristically Karaite. Note, for instance, the expressions המלמים, or המשכילים, or המשכילים, in the text below, note 142.

¹⁴¹ This is also the conclusion drawn by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 291.

¹⁴² The colophon reads in parts as follows: שלם ספר עדת דבורים מבאר ד' יוסף הקטטניני: אשר אסף וקבץ דעות המלמים ואשר הוסיף אף הוא מכה חכמתו... ימצא רחמים החכם המשכיל הנבון הזה גם כל המשכילים המורים אשר עסקו ויגעו ולמדו בישראל חקים וזקקים... ושלם על ידי אני יהודה בן יעקב ביום זה ג' לשבוע בחדש סיון בכ' בו בשנת דתחקס'ו לבריאת עולם... ושלם על ידי הנה במדינת גגרא

¹⁴³ The colophon was written by a donor, Hōsha'nā ben Michael, who dedicated the MS to the Karaite community of Sulkhāt on the occasion of settling in that city after having left *Gagra* (ש)א [מולדתו גגרא (ש)]. Cf. the text in Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 135, No. 72.

¹⁴⁴ Our first authentic testimony on Karaites in Sulkhāt stems from the year 1278 C.E. Cf. above, 60 and note 12.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Harkavy, *Hadashim gam Yeshanim*, No. 2, 11, note 4; Poznański, *ZfHB*, XX (1917), 80, § 3; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 129; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 241.

on the Bosphorus to the Crimea, but also moved along the coast, through Trebizond and Gagry, encircling the Pontic basin from the East.¹⁴⁶

However, the reading suggested by the scholars is not without its difficulty. There is no plausible justification for the Hebrew transliteration of the name *Gagri* or *Gagry* with an *aleph*-ending (*Gagrā*), the way we find it in both documents; a *yōd*-ending would obviously be the only natural and correct solution. It is not impossible, therefore, that the true reading of the word is *Gangra*. The Greek spelling *Γαγγρα* (based on contiguity of two *gammas*) must have undoubtedly influenced the absence of the *nūn* in the Hebrew transliteration as well.

If acceptable, we would have been thus provided with documentary evidence for the existence of a Karaite (and Rabbanite) community in a city in which a Jewish merchant colony should have been postulated anyway. Gangra (=Germanicopolis), the ancient capital of Paphlagonia,¹⁴⁷ an essential link in the traffic system connecting Nicomedia, Amaseia and Ancyra,¹⁴⁸ and a place known since ancient times for its salt mines,¹⁴⁹ contained a Jewish population in the Roman past¹⁵⁰ as well as in Seljūḳ times (Tchangri).¹⁵¹ At the period under discussion, it was a point on which all East-West traffic, circumventing the northern border of the Konya Sultanate, hinged.¹⁵² Not only is there no justification for assuming a break in the continuity of the Jewish community in the city, but, on the contrary, its importance must have risen high in the wake of the political and economic developments in the area at the time covered by the present volume. It is to be hoped that a further study of the problem (including the linguistic aspect of it) will contribute to the elucidation of the Jewish (Karaite and Rabbanite) role in the Pontic

¹⁴⁶ On the migration from Byzantium to the Crimea, see the brief comment above, 63.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. A.H.M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 168 f.; *idem*, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, 70. See also Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 192, 195, 197, 447, 453; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, I, 188, 191, 372, 434, 465, and note 28 in Vol. II, 1081.

¹⁴⁸ On the roads passing Gangra, see Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 197, 320 f. There also, 257 ff. (and esp. 258 f.), Ramsay's restoration is given of the road section linking Gangra with Ancyra; that section is missing in the Peutinger Table, but Ramsay considers it "necessary" in order to accord with literary accounts. Cf. further, Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, II, 1082, note 32, and 1083, note 33. See also Philippon, *Das byz. Reich als eine geographische Erscheinung*, 154.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Banse, *Die Türkei: Eine moderne Geographie*, 86.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain*, I, 194 and note 4.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Galanté, *Les Juifs sous la domination des Turcs seldjoukides*, 11 (cf. there also, 6 f., for the general story).

¹⁵² Cf. above, 121. On the vicissitudes of Gangra in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, cf. Chalandon, in *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 244, 357, 377.

area prior to the final and uncontested ascendancy of the Genoese merchants.¹⁵³

IN ARMENIA

It is also possible that Karaite settlement spread to the adjoining territories of Armenia, if indeed it did not precede the establishment of the sect in Byzantium.¹⁵⁴ Sectarian activity was not altogether new to Armenian Jewry. As early as the ninth century, a non-Karaite sectary from Baghdād, Mūsā az-Za'farānī, found scope for his teaching in the city of Tiflis.¹⁵⁵ In the twelfth century the activity of the "Tiflisite" sect is still attested to by a Byzantine Karaite source.¹⁵⁶

With the increased intertwining of Armenian history with that of the Empire in the period under review, conditions were ripe also for the strengthening of ties between the Jewries of Byzantium and Armenia. Indeed, if our reading is correct, the reference in Hadassi's encyclopedia to a visit of Oriental Karaites in Constantinople in the middle of the twelfth century may very well be pointing to sectaries originating from the Armenian city of Gargar.¹⁵⁷ In that case, one may perhaps be justified in interpreting the visit as a temporary removal of these Karaites to

¹⁵³ On that final development in the thirteenth century, cf. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIII^e siècle*; Lopez, *Storia delle Colonie Genovesi nel Mediterraneo*.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. above, 64, note 21. On the region in general see Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, 175–67, esp. 173 f. Incidentally, when describing the flight of the population in the wake of the tenth-century Byzantine conquests in the East (see above, 96, note 36), Bar-Hebraeus, 169, reports also the migration of (Christian) Armenians into the Byzantine-held provinces of Asia Minor. There is a likelihood, of course, that Armenian Jews (including Karaites, if there were any) also drifted along with the migratory current. Cf. our discussion of the migration movement earlier in this chapter, 102 ff.

On Armeno-Jewish relations in Asia Minor in later ages, see Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 324; his *Nouveau recueil des nouveaux documents concernant l'histoire des Juifs de Turquie*, 30 ff. On the "Armeno-Jews," cf. the first-quoted book of Galanté, II, 313 ff. Of interest are also the earlier comparative studies of V. Aptowitzer, such as "The Influence of Jewish Law on the Development of Jurisprudence in the Christian Orient," *JQR* (N.S.), I (1910–11), 217 ff., and other essays.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Kırķisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāqib*, ed. Nemoy, I, 13 f., 57; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 329 f., 389, and *Karaite Anthology*, 52 f.; similarly, Hadassi, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 4ld, Alphabet 98. See also above, 64 f., note 21.

¹⁵⁶ See on it below, Chapter VIII.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 30a–b, Alphabet 61: בריאות האלהי' משונות זו מזו ביצירתם: וטעם שתיית' במתיקות וקרירות מימי אף אנגמים מעיינות ובורות מקרות מים ונהרי' ואפיקים בהלכות' ומשיבתם: וטעם שתיית' במתיקות וקרירות מימי שתייתך: גודל עמקם ורובי מימיה' ומעוטם נחלי' מנחלים: מהם לתרופות גופות בשתיית' ומהם להוק ברצון אל אליהם: כמעין ובאר אפ"ט אשר בראו האלהי' בארץ מזרח זריחת שמשך: דמותו בימים הטהורי' הזכים ולבני' הנשתים לכל חי בחיותם: נובעת ויוצאת היא האפ"ט מעט כקפיאת השמן ונמשבת במעיינה כמים הנובעי' ונחלים מאדמת': ומריח נכרת ונודעת לכל באי עולמן: המקום ההוא במזרח קצה הארץ כשטופר לנו

Constantinople, owing to the upheavals in Gargar reported by Bar-Hebraeus for the first half of the twelfth century.¹⁵⁸

At the southeastern end of the vast Empire, the conquest in 1032 of the important city of Edessa by George Maniakes and the annexation of the whole surrounding region to the Byzantine State¹⁵⁹ might have possibly increased the Karaite population of Byzantium. If the etymology suggested for the name of the great twelfth-century Karaite scholar in Constantinople, Yehūdāh Hadassī [read perhaps: Hedessī], as pointing to his provenance from Edessa, is correct,¹⁶⁰ we shall again be allowed to learn indirectly that a Karaite community was in existence in that city.

מן יעקב גרגירין שחלך לשם: ונתארח בקושטנוגא עיר מלכות גלחנו עם חבריו מספר כשראה שם: ואמר כי שם המקום הוא כלקי" נשאר בלשון עממיך: והמלך של מדינות ההם שמר שולטן סנייד בזה המקום הוא המעיין: ובראו האלהי' מששת ימי בראשית... זו תרופתה שבשחייתה שישתו ממנה חולי בני האדם מועלת לכל חולי... טעמה כשמן והיא חמה כאש מחממת כל קרירות הגוף במשיחתה אם היא ממעינה טהורה... יחד כלל השנים מיום שברא האלהי' במעינה כך היא: אך בזמן הקיץ בימי תמוז ואב היא חזקה כי נקפאת מעט מהגרמת חמימות השמש מאד חמה היא: והיא מועלת יותר משל חרף ברפואתך: כי אילו הייתה טהורה באלו הארצות על כל חולי היתה מועלת ברצון האלהי': אף הנה מטמאי' אותה עם שמנים אחרים וע"כ היא מעט מועלת וריחה מעט בנחיריך: כי ביותר הוא במקום ההוא בעיניך: לבעבור כי המלך ההוא שם מס עליה ומעשר רענשי' יען הועלתה הרבה והעצומה אשר יצרה וקבעה חאלה' Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 219 f., No. 168.

Hadassī's story deals with the supposedly curative properties of an oriental spring somewhere in Armenia (אפיטס = *naphtha*? — cf. P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXIII [1884], 516). The region is reported to have been in the hands of the Sultan Sinjar at the time of Hadassī's writing, i.e., about 1149. The sultan, as it is reported further, imposed heavy charge on the use of the spring. This falls in well with the chronology of Sinjar, the Seljūq ruler (1086-1159). Cf. on him Bar-Hebraeus, 256 ff., 285, etc.

Now, the fame of that miraculous spring reached the twelfth-century Karaite community of Constantinople through a certain Jacob גרגירין, who visited the place and later was the guest of the sectarian center in the capital. He was accompanied by a group of his countrymen and appears to have been a person of importance. It is very likely that the name of Hadassī's interlocutor was GARGIRIAN (or GARGARIAN), which may be pointing to his provenance from the Armenian city of Gargar. Since there are no vowels in Hebrew, the reading suggested here involves no changes in the spelling of the word. The Armenian ending of the name and Jacob's rather detailed knowledge of the conditions in the region fit in perfectly with our assumption.

On Armenian-like endings of Jewish surnames (*ian*) under the influence of the predominantly Armenian environment, cf. Galanté, *Appendice à l'histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, 47. On Gargar see Bar-Hebraeus, 247, 249, 250, 251, 261, 265, 276, 405.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Bar-Hebraeus, 276.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Bar-Hebraeus, 192 f.; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 257, and the map of the period; Vasiliev, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 312; Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches* (= Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, III), 134 ff.

On the Jewish community in Edessa (Urfa) in later times, see Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 309 ff.

¹⁶⁰ A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 56.

Of course, this still does not fix Hadassi's actual birthplace, which remains entirely a matter of conjecture. He may have himself emigrated from Edessa to Constantinople in the early twelfth century. On the other hand, he may have been born in the capital, whither his parents (or ancestors) possibly moved from Edessa, following its capture by the Byzantine armies.¹⁶¹

GATEWAY TO THE BOSPORUS

The routes described in the foregoing pages—both those running from the South, the Southeast and the Southwest of the Peninsula, and those traversing it from East to West along the northern shore—centered ultimately at a point focal to all Anatolian traffic in the Byzantine period: Nicomedia, the natural gateway to the Bosphorus. Ever since ancient times, centuries before the basic transformation had taken place in the orientation of Asia Minor's road network, this "First City" and "Metropolis" of Bithynia¹⁶² knew how to reap the fruits of its unique geographical position.¹⁶³ Situated at the tip of the long fjord extending eastwards from the Propontis, Nicomedia "was built on a narrow strip of land lying between the water's edge and the curving hills which rise behind it like the tiers of a huge theatre. The situation [notes David Magie] was both picturesque and commercially advantageous. Not only did the gulf afford a deep-water harbor of unusual excellence, but the city lay at the end of the great trade route which traversed the whole length of northern Asia Minor from the Propontis to Pontus and Armenia. As a result, the carrying-trade of Nicomedia developed rapidly, and its commerce, combined with its importance as the royal capital. . . , gave the city a pre-eminence which lasted for centuries."¹⁶⁴

This importance had grown manifoldly in the subsequent generations, when, in addition to serving as terminus of the great northern route,

¹⁶¹ I have discussed the problem at some length in a paper, "Yehūdah Hadassī and the Crusades," presented to the American Academy for Jewish Research in December, 1952.

¹⁶² Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, I, 588.

¹⁶³ On Nicomedia's geographic position see Magie, *op. cit.*, I, 305, and notes, II, 1184 ff. (notes 10–12). Of earlier studies, cf. e.g., Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 45, 64 ff., where especially the northern roads, centered in Nicomedia, are fully discussed. For the cities of Bithynia and Pontus in general and their rise and importance in ancient times, see the chapter "Bithynia and Pontus," in Jones' *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 148 ff.

¹⁶⁴ Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, I, 305.

Nicomedia was made the hub of practically *all* Anatolian roads converging on the northeastern corner of the Peninsula. For it was, we recall, the transfer of the imperial capital to Nicomedia in 292 that had actually revolutionized the major direction of Anatolia's road system.¹⁶⁵ The resulting new geo-political orientation had never been really altered again. The situation arising from the later establishment of the capital in Constantinople entailed, it is true, a shift in emphasis and in the ultimate goal of the road system, but it hardly constituted a basic change of direction. It meant merely that the road system, already centered in Nicomedia, was to extend beyond the initial (Nicomedian) terminus and reach out, via Chalcedon, for the Bosphorus and Constantinople. Nicomedia ceased, thus, to be the *final* objective of trans-Anatolian traffic; yet, so far as land communication is concerned, it could by no means be bypassed.

In view of this significance of Nicomedia for trans-Anatolian commerce, the complete lack of testimonies regarding a Jewish settlement in the city all through the Middle and Late Byzantine ages is the more perplexing.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, it is difficult to see how the flow of Jewish merchants could have skipped the Nicomedian harbor or the city's road junction when gravitating westwards in the period covered by the present volume. Nor, for that matter, is the absence of an indigenous Jewish community in Nicomedia, even prior to the tenth- and eleventh-century migration waves, at all conceivable. The confidence that a Jewish population must have existed in the city in Middle and Late Byzantine times is strengthened by the documentary references to local Jewish groups both under Roman and Early Byzantine (i.e., pre-Heraclian) emperors¹⁶⁷ and under Turkish rule.¹⁶⁸ Unless some unusually grave events had caused the Jews to withdraw (or be expelled) from the region—and we are aware of no such events—there is hardly any reason to justify their sudden disappearance under the Byzantines and their equally sudden reappearance under Ottoman dominion. The contrary, rather, has more

¹⁶⁵ Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, 74. Cf. also, above, 105.

¹⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., the indices to Krauss' *Studien zur byz.-jüdischen Geschichte*, or to Starr's books, *Jews in the Byz. Empire* and *Romania*. None of them lists Nicomedia.

¹⁶⁷ For Roman and Early Byzantine times, see Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain*, I, 193 f., and note 1 on p. 194. Juster does not elaborate on the history of the Jewish community of Nicomedia nor, for that matter, of any other locality. He simply enumerates the Jewish settlements in the Roman Diaspora (on Asia Minor see I, 188-94), and devotes a note to each locality for bibliographical guidance.

¹⁶⁸ The community's history in Turkish times has briefly been reviewed by A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 262-64.

to commend itself: it stands to reason that not only was the continuity of Jewish settlement in Nicomedia never seriously interrupted, but that the above-discussed upsurge of immigration of Jewish (and non-Jewish) traders into Byzantium, from the late tenth century on, augmented this settlement both with regard to sheer numbers and with regard to intensity of the economic function which local Jewry was performing.

Here again an example is afforded of how the Byzantine Karaite story comes to the succour of general Jewish history in the Empire. It is the story about one of Karaism's keenest mind, Aaron ben Elijah, so-called *ha-aḥarōn*, "the Last" or, rather, "the Younger," in distinction to the century-earlier Aaron ben Joseph, *ha-rīshōn*, "the First," i.e., "the Elder."¹⁶⁹ All Karaite manuscripts are unanimous in calling Aaron the Younger a "Nicomedian;"¹⁷⁰ hence, obviously, a large and decisive part of the scholar's life was connected with the city of Nicomedia and as such it engraved itself on the memory of subsequent Karaite generations.¹⁷¹ A late example it is, to be sure, one that stands chronologically outside of the period covered by the present volume. Nevertheless, it may prove useful for the reconstruction of earlier times, too. It is, at any rate, our one and only evidence of the existence of Karaites in Nicomedia at any time in history.¹⁷²

AARON BEN ELIJAH, "THE NICOMEDIAN"

Unlike the case with many other Karaite worthies, we are fortunate to possess valuable biographical data on this first-rank jurist, exegete, and last Karaite philosopher. True, here, too, some details can be only inferentially established. Thus, while the time and circumstances of Aaron's death have reliably been transmitted (he died in an epidemic

¹⁶⁹ The best summary on Aaron ben Elijah is that given in German by Simchoni, in *Enc. Judaica*, I, 37-42. A useful Hebrew sketch is to be found in *Enṣiklopedyah 'Ivriṯh* (Enc. Hebraica), I, 592-94. Likewise, a brief introduction in English precedes the selection of translations from Aaron's writings, included by Nemoj in his *Karaite Antology*, 170 ff. These résumés supersede the earlier English summary by Kaufmann Kohler (*Jewish Enc.*, I, 9a-10b), drawn mainly along the lines of Fürst's *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 261-80.

¹⁷⁰ So in the Jena and Leiden MSS of *Kether Tōrah* (utilized by Jost; see note 173, below) and in the Firkowicz MS underlying the printed (Gozlow) edition of the work. See the respective frontpages of Savuskan's editions of both *Gan 'Eden* and *Kether Tōrah*.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Lucki, *Orah Šaddiḳim*, 21b, 23a (under Letter \mathfrak{d}), and 24a (under \mathfrak{d}).

¹⁷² Galanté (*Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 262) was the first to call attention expressly to Aaron's Nicomedian provenance as proof of the existence of Jews in Nicomedia in Byzantine times.

in the month of Tishri, 1369 C.E.),¹⁷³ the year of his birth is a matter for speculation. The date to be found in most of the secondary literature ("about 1300") is but a repetition of a suggestion advanced almost a century ago.¹⁷⁴ It apparently is too early;¹⁷⁵ the second decade of the fourteenth century seems to me a better guess—but a guess just the same.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Jost, "Lehre der Karaiten und ihr Kampf gegen die rabbinische Tradition," *Israelitische Annalen* (ed. Jost), I (1839), No. 11, 83a; Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 59, 121 (Note XXVII); Lucki, in Mann's *Texts and Studies*, II, 1417. Aaron died some four months after the death of his teacher Joseph.

¹⁷⁴ The date of Aaron's birth is not given in any of the primary sources. Fürst was apparently the first to advance the suggestion that Aaron was "um 1300 geboren." Cf. his *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 261. Accordingly, Aaron was 46 on completion of his philosophical opus 'Eṣ Ḥayyim (the latter was completed in 1346; see the author's colophon in Fr. Delitzsch [ed.], עץ חיים, *Ahron ben Elia's des Karäers System der Religionsphilosophie*, 209 [bottom]: ונשלם בשנת ה'קף לפרט סימן וקוף יגשה על ירושלם). He presumably was nearing the age of seventy at the time of his death.

None of the modern scholars who preceded Fürst or wrote more or less simultaneously with him (i.e., before or about 1865) ventured a date for Aaron's birth. Cf., e.g., Jost, in the above-cited article of 1839; or Delitzsch's Prolegomena §2 ("Leben und Schriften Ahron b. Elia's") to *op. cit.*, iv-vi (published in 1841); or Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṭē Qadmoniyyoth*, 234 (published in 1860); or Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 58 (published in 1866 but written in 1865; Neubauer had seen already Fürst's book, but was unequivocally critical of it [cf. his Preface, viii]).

The first who followed Fürst with regard to establishing the date of Aaron's birth (without, however, acknowledging his indebtedness) was Yehūdah ben Isaac Savuskan, the Karaite editor of Aaron ben Elijah's *Gan 'Eden* and *Kether Tōrah* (both published in the Firkowicz press at Gozlow, 1866). Cf. the הקדמת המניה והמזניא לאור in Savuskan's edition of *Gan 'Eden* (the Preface is unpaginated; our passage is on the second page): המחבר הקדוש ע"ה נולד בשנת חמשה אלפים וששים ליצירה . . . ונח . . . בשנת . . . שבועים שנה; similarly, in the Preface to *Kether Tōrah* (unpaginated; see note 1 on the first page). Cf. further Harkavy, *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 443a; Kohler, *Jewish Enc.*, I, 9a; Poznański, *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, 669a; Simchoni, *Enc. Judaica*, I, 37; Assaf and Lichtenstein, *Enṣiklopedyah 'Ivrith*, 592.

¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Mann has come up with a broader version of Lucki's account of Karaite literature which includes an important passage on Aaron ben Elijah. The passage contains an interesting Karaite tradition regarding Aaron's age on completion of his 'Eṣ Ḥayyim in 1346: וקבלנו מאבותינו ורבותינו הקדושים שהרב הזה היה חיי שנים כשחבר את ספר עץ חיים (Texts and Studies, II, 1417). Mann censures Fürst's date as "a guess" only, since, according to the above tradition expounded by Lucki, Aaron was born in 1328. Cf. there, note 46.

¹⁷⁶ It would seem rather impossible for a youth of 18 to compose a philosophical work of the stature and the wealth of knowledge displayed by Aaron in 'Eṣ Ḥayyim. Hence, Nemoy (*Karaite Anthology*, 170, note 2), is right in discarding the year 1328 as "somewhat too late" for Aaron's birthdate. For, indeed, Karaite traditions of the kind offered by Lucki should always be taken with a grain of salt. Cf., for instance, the story cited by Mordecai ben Nisan in *Dod Mordecai*, 9b, regarding Moses Bashyachi, the great-grandson of the oft-quoted Elijah Bashyachi, who allegedly wrote many books at the age of 16, and died at 18. Another tradition sets his age then at 28.

Less difficulty presents the problem of the place of Aaron's literary (and undoubtedly also communal) activity. As already noted, the agnomen "Nicomedio" attached to his name and repeated invariably in the extant manuscripts does not leave any doubt as to the close connection between Aaron ben Elijah and Nicomedia.¹⁷⁷ The fact that in his mid-30's (and, at any rate, in 1354 C.E.) we find Aaron in Constantinople,¹⁷⁸ engaged in the writing of his great legal opus,¹⁷⁹ does not militate against this special relationship of the scholar to Nicomedia.¹⁸⁰

Cf. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 63, 121 f. (Note XXIX). Cf. also Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 84, and note 3, and my comments in *Ensiġklopedyah 'Ivriith*, IX, 963.

Nevertheless, however unreliable as to details, these romantic presentations of certain personalities in Karaite history contain undoubtedly a kernel of truth. They point to the perseverance of historical reminiscences regarding the untimely death of these personalities and the tragic circumstances under which their deaths occurred. We may thus take it for granted that Aaron's age at his demise in 1369 was much below the seventy assumed by Fürst and Savuskan. Indeed, the extant text clearly states that Aaron fell victim of an epidemic more or less at the same time as his teacher; hence, he did not die of old age.

In brief: While the veracity of the tradition, alleging that the scholar completed his philosophical treatise at 18, is to be doubted, we shall be on safe ground in assuming that he passed away at the relatively young age of fifty or so. No wonder, then that, in view of the impressive literary output of his rather short lifetime, his first work was thought to have been the product of his youthful days. In reality, he was 27 or more when completing '*Eṣ Ḥayyim* in 1346. He was born, accordingly, sometime in the latter half of the second decade of the fourteenth century.

¹⁷⁷ See above, 132, note 170.

¹⁷⁸ To be sure, this fact was nowhere explicitly stated, but the general impression is that an authoritative code of Karaite law must have been created in the main center of Karaite communal and scholastic initiative in Byzantium, namely, in Constantinople. This was also the express tradition preserved by the Constantinopolitan community. Cf. Elijah Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ķiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. XVI, 10a: והנה זה החכם חבר ספרו בקוסטינה.

¹⁷⁹ The assertion in many of the studies quoted above that Aaron actually completed his code *Gan 'Eden* in 1354 is inexact. This date appears somewhere in the middle of the work (in connection with the discussion of Jubilee reckoning in the Jewish calendar); the whole book may have been finished much later.

Cf. *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Ḥag Shabū'oth*, 58a-b: ואמר כי בהשלים השבעה כוכבים כל אחד יובלותיו ועוד יחזור כוכב שבתי להתחיל יובלותיו תהא גאולת ישראל מהגלות כמו שנאלו ישראל ממצרים. והנה שבו יובלות כל הכוכבים שני אלפים ארבע מאות וחמשים שנה ועתה חזרו כלם ונכנסו יובלות כוכב שבתי ועברו מאתים ושש עשרה שנה עד זמננו זה שנת חמשת אלפים מאה וארבע עשרה שנה לפרט [= 1354]. ומן הדין היה כמו שיצאו ישראל ממצרים בתחלת יובלותי לצאת גם עתה. והנה עתה עברו שנה זו שאנחנו: See further, Section *Shemittah we-Yöbel*, 68d: עומדים בה שהיא שנת חמשת אלפים מאה וארבע עשרה ליצירה היא שנת חמישית לשמיטה שלישית מן היובל שהוא יובל ג'ב משהתחילו ישראל למנות שמטת ויובלות Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1417, note 47.

¹⁸⁰ The only scholars who call Aaron ben Elijah a "Constantinopolitan" (*al-Ķisṭanṭīni*) are the fifteenth-century Arabic-writing Samuel al-Maghribī and al-Hitī. Cf. for the former, Pinsker, *Likḳūṣē Ḳadmoniyyoth*, App., Note V, esp. 144, and the quotation on p. 148. For al-Hitī cf. Margoliouth, "Ibn al-Hitī's Chronicle of Karaite

Nor does it in any way impair the assumption that, prior to his removal to the capital, Aaron had found wide scope for his learning and scholarly activity in his hometown in Asia Minor. After all, it is only to be expected that the famous scholar and author would eventually be invited to assume spiritual leadership of the Constantinople community, numerically at least the most important Karaite grouping in the country. Nevertheless, no clear-cut evidence is available for the statement made in all Karaite studies that Aaron settled permanently in the capital and that he died there,¹⁸¹ although such a development is most likely.¹⁸²

Whatever the case, the hitherto discussed data pertaining to Aaron ben Elijah bear sufficient testimony to the existence of Karaites in Nicomedia in the first half of the fourteenth century. Indeed, all modern researchers take it for granted (and quite rightly so) that Aaron ben Elijah not only lived in Nicomedia but was also born there.¹⁸³ Undoubtedly

Doctors," *JQR* (O.S.), IX (1897), 435 (Arabic), 443 (Eng. tr.); see also Nemoy's translation in *Karaite Anthology*, 235. These authors, however, did not possess first-hand information on Karaite communities and personages outside the Arabic-speaking world and reached certain conclusions in the biographical field on the basis of textual inferences alone. Needless to say that, owing to the poor state of sources, such inferences were often erroneous. Thus, for instance, al-Hīṭī (*loc. cit.*) lists the twelfth-century Yehūdah Hadassi in Constantinople after the fourteenth-century Aaron ben Elijah. See partly on the problem my "Ibn al-Hīṭī and the Chronology of Joseph al-Baṣīr," *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1-2 (1957), 71 f. Of course, it is also possible that, by calling Aaron *al-Ḳisṭanīnī*, the Arabic-speaking authors intended merely to indicate the *general Byzantine* origin of that scholar as contrasted with the Karaite leaders in the Islamic environment.

¹⁸¹ Cf., e.g., Savuskan, both in his Preface to *Gan 'Eden* (second page) and in the Preface to *Kether Tōrah* (first page, note 1), respectively: וחי בקיסרינה ושם חבר את ספריו; והיה חי בקיסטאנוטניה בתחלת המאה ה'ב' לאלף הששי; Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 170: "He died . . . presumably in Constantinople where he is said to have settled;" etc.

¹⁸² Aaron's last great work, the biblical commentary *Kether Tōrah*, was completed in 1362. Cf. the author's introductory poem in the printed edition (by Savuskan), la: ואחרן בן אליהו ילידו (=את הפירוש) שנת ה'קכ"ב למנין הברואים; However, the place of the writing is not indicated. According to the prevailing opinion it also was Constantinople.

¹⁸³ The initial difference of opinion in the matter was due to the unwarranted statement in *Dod Mordecai*, 14b, according to which Aaron's birthplace was במצרים, i.e., Cairo. This was accepted, without much ado, by Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṭē*, 234; Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 261 (and Volume of Notes, 101, note 246); Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 58.

Other scholars (Delitzsch, Graetz, Harkavy, Poznański, Mann, Nemoy, as well as the Karaite Savuskan) quite correctly rejected this allegation and stressed Aaron's Nicomedian origin. True, some of them attempted to synthesize the two facts and postulated that Aaron lived also for some time in Cairo; so Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, iv, and Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, VII (4th ed.), 325. Mann, however, forcefully emphasized the fact that "we have no evidence for Aaron's stay or even visit to Cairo" (*Texts and Studies*, II, 255).

The above testimony of Karaite settlement in Nicomedia is not only of value to Karaite history proper but to Byzantine Jewish history in general. Unaccompanied by any other testimony of Jewish activity in the city, it is also our only pointer, for a whole millennium, to the existence in Nicomedia of Jews in general, subsequent to the sixth and prior to the sixteenth century.¹⁸⁵ Whether or not the Karaites appeared in Nicomedia already before the thirteenth century, as result of the demographic movements discussed above, is a matter of judgment. This writer tends to answer the question in the affirmative, although no documentary or literary confirmation is as yet available. But, whatever the date of their entry and settlement in the city, the Karaites' very existence there is, in accord with Rule A (formulated earlier in this chapter) an automatic proof of the simultaneous existence in Nicomedia of a Rabbanite community as well.¹⁸⁶ In fact, since Karaites tended to settle alongside already-existing Rabbanite communities, it can be taken for granted that the Rabbanite group in Nicomedia *preceded* the establishment of the Karaite settlement there.¹⁸⁷

CONSTANTINOPLE

Whatever the importance of Asia Minor and the commercial horizons it revealed in all directions, the goal of all roads and of every enterprising individual was Constantinople. This was "the Sovereign of all Cities" (Villhardouin). Here was the center of world trade, the magnificent cosmopolis. Its fabulous treasures were a theme for song and story on the banks of the Rhine and the Euphrates alike; on the Bosphorus they were a tangible, undisputed reality.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ See above, 131, notes 167–68. The latest reference from pre-Heraclian times is that of the year 577, when Nicomedian Jews manifested in favor of Eutychius. The earliest mention, on the other hand, of a Jewish settlement in Nicomedia under Ottoman rule stems apparently from the end of sixteenth century. Cf. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, II, 262.

¹⁸⁶ See above, 118.

¹⁸⁷ Chances are that in the episode cited above (note 184) from Aaron's *Gan 'Eden*, with reference to his father-in-law's anti-Rabbanite polemic, a genuine and *direct* testimony has been preserved concerning the Rabbanite community of Nicomedia in the first half of the fourteenth century. The story has all the earmarks of a *local* case, involving two local Rabbanites and the local Rabbanite *shōhet*, with the local Karaites indignantly denouncing what seemed to them an obvious breach of Mosaic law. Names of the persons in question are given (the first being a fine sample of a Greek Jewish name), while the names of both the *shōhet* and his father are provided with the honorific title "Rabbi." Also the exact date of the event (1339) is supplied.

Unfortunately, there is no certainty that Aaron's father-in-law lived, indeed, in Nicomedia. He may have been a Constantinopolitan (cf. end of note 184).

¹⁸⁸ On medieval Constantinople and its natural advantages, see A. van Millingen,

In general, Byzantine authorities discouraged movement within the the Empire.¹⁸⁹ Settlement in Constantinople was particularly difficult and an elaborate system of permits governed the sojourn of aliens in "the City" (ἡ πόλις).¹⁹⁰ The term "alien" was apparently applied also to Byzantine provincials and not only to visitors from abroad.¹⁹¹ In spite of these restrictions there was a steady growth of foreign merchant colonies in Constantinople, occupying separate blocks in the urban area.¹⁹² This movement of merchants into the capital undoubtedly included also Rabbanites and Karaites from the East who settled alongside the native Rabbanite community.

Byzantine Constantinople; J. B. Bury, "Causes of the Survival of the Roman Empire in the East," *Selected Essays*, 232 ff.; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 21 ff.; *idem*, *Byzantine Civilization*, 163, 184 ff.; Diehl, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 10, 14 ff., 108 ff.; *idem*, *Byzance—grandeur et décadence*, 104 ff.; and in *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 745 ff. See also the special chapter on "La vie à Constantinople," in Bréhier's *La civilisation byzantine* [= *Le monde byzantin*, III], 77 ff.; Andréadès, in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 76 f.; R. Lopez, *Storia delle Colonie Genovesi nel Mediterraneo*, 285 f. Cf. further the general comments of Philippson, *Das byz. Reich als eine geographische Erscheinung*, 24–30.

¹⁸⁹ Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization*, 101, 210.

¹⁹⁰ See the discussion of this system on the basis of the *Book of the Prefect* by Ch. M. Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance sous la dynastie de Macedoine*, 47 ff.; Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization*, 172 f. On the special features of Byzantine economy see also G. I. Bratianu, *Etudes byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale*; L. Brentano, *Byzantinische Volkswirtschaft*; the economic chapters in N. Baynes' *The Byzantine Empire*, in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, and in Bréhier's *La civilisation byzantine*, esp. 199 ff.; and the paragraphs dealing with the economic conditions of the Empire in the already-quoted books of Ostrogorsky, Vasiliev and Diehl. Cf. also the chapters on Byzantium in Heyd's *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, in Pirenne's *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, and in *Cambridge Economic History*, II, 86–118 (by Runciman).

¹⁹¹ On the legal connotation of the term "alien" see Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance*, 43, 61 f. See further R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 14, note 1, and 22 ff. Lopez, 22 f., note 4, does not accept the notion that Greek provincials were treated on a par with foreigners, and makes a distinction between ἐξωτερικοί (=outsiders) and ἐθνικοί or βάρβαροι (=foreigners). See also our further discussion of foreigners' quarters below, 140 f.

¹⁹² Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance*, 128; cf. also earlier, 49. For a most recent restatement of Byzantine economic policy with regard to "aliens" in Constantinople see the already-quoted paper of Lopez, in *Relazioni* (X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche), III, 151 f. See also Lopez's aforementioned article in *Speculum*, XX (1945), esp. 25 ff., and the brief comment in Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, 20, note 9. Andréadès, too (Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 67), argues that only "barbarians from the North" were classed as undesirables. Other foreigners "appear to have obtained, without much difficulty, permission to sojourn and even to settle in Constantinople."

An indirect proof of a large-scale influx of alien merchants (including Jews) into Constantinople during that period can be gleaned from a passage in the Syriac chronicle of Bar-Hebraeus.¹⁹³ Reporting on riots which took place in the city in 1044 C.E., Bar-Hebraeus states the following:

And at that time when there were many aliens, Armenians and Arabs and Jews, in the royal city, a great tumult broke out against Constantine the king. . . .

And the king, having inquired into the cause of the tumult, was told that the aliens had made the tumult, so that they may loot the city. Then the king commanded that there should not remain in it anyone who had entered it during the last thirty years, and that the man who stayed should have his eyes gouged out. Then there went out about one hundred thousand souls.

We are not concerned here whether Bar-Hebraeus correctly appraised the cause and the details (omitted in our quotation) of the commotion itself. It is most probable that there were causes involved other than that suggested by Bar-Hebraeus.¹⁹⁴ What does strike us as relevant is the mention of aliens from the East (including Jews) as a conspicuous and significant factor in the population, and their arrival in the city *en masse* during the first decades of the eleventh century. Smaller contingents drifted into the capital earlier, after some preliminary sojourn in Asia Minor following the Byzantine conquests.¹⁹⁵ The number of Jews among these newcomers is, of course, unknown. Yet the very fact that the chronicler found it natural to mention them by name as a separate group merits our attention.¹⁹⁶

In any case, there must have been, in the early years of the eleventh century, a Karaite settlement on the Bosphorus where Tobias ben Moses

¹⁹³ Cf. E. W. Budge, *The Syriac Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj Bar-Hebraeus*, I (English version), 203. We recall, of course, our earlier discussion of Bar-Hebraeus' testimonies concerning the migrations into Byzantium (cf. above, 102 ff.). These testimonies, however, referred merely to the Byzantine cities of Asia Minor and not to the capital itself.

¹⁹⁴ See the comment by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 195 f.

¹⁹⁵ See above, note 193.

¹⁹⁶ The specific mention of Jews in this connection is even more interesting when compared with the statement made by the same chronicler in a later part of his book. Commenting on the events of the year 1204, Bar-Hebraeus observes (*Chronography*, I, 358) that "the Frankish merchants who were dwelling in Constantinople: now there were about 30,000 (!) of them, but on account of the great size of the city they were not conspicuous." In view of this, the fact that Ibn al-Athir's account of the events of 1044 merely records the participation in the riots of "Muslims, Christians and other kinds" is fully understandable. Cf. the reference in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 195.

was born and whence he went to Palestine some two decades later for an extended period of studies in the Karaite academy of Jerusalem.¹⁹⁷

IN THE CAPITAL

The character and status of the Jewish quarter (or quarters) in Constantinople at various periods of Byzantine history merit a reexamination. Such a reexamination, pertaining to the capital's Jewish society as a whole, cannot, of course, be undertaken in a volume devoted specifically to one group alone within that society.¹⁹⁸ Suffice it to stress at this junction that, with our growing understanding of the Byzantine guild system as well as of the ever-expanding function of foreigners in the economy and demography of the Empire, the discriminatory connotation hitherto attached to the Jews' quarter in Constantinople must be modified considerably.¹⁹⁹

The picture we gain is one of interdependence, nay, interchangeability of occupational and religio-ethnic criteria in the formation of foreigners' quarters across the Golden Horn.²⁰⁰ The colorfully cosmopolitan character of the whole district in which these quarters (including that

¹⁹⁷ See above, 49 ff., esp. 51.

¹⁹⁸ I shall return to discuss the problem in the framework of my forthcoming "Jews in Byzantium" (from the post-Heraclian period till the Crusades).

¹⁹⁹ Such a modification is already evident in the last work of J. Starr. In his *Jews in the Byz. Empire* (1939) he listed, as customary, the Jewish quarter of Constantinople among those "most common characteristics of Jewish life in the Diaspora for the past two thousand years, . . . for which the Venetians coined the term ghetto" (p. 43). With his usual caution and restraint Starr added, however, that "it is, indeed, difficult to discriminate in Roman and early medieval times" between cases of "obligatory and voluntary segregation."

The same line of presentation is continued in Starr's *Romania*. There again more than once the Jewish quarter in Constantinople is designated as a "ghetto" (p. 25). Apparently, however, the text of the book was prepared by Starr many years before its publication in 1949; for, indeed, in the footnotes, which were undoubtedly rewritten after 1945 (as follows from the bibliographical entries), Starr seems to have adopted the new view which "has subsequently been suggested on excellent grounds" (p. 33, note 1).

This new view was first expounded by Professor Salo W. Baron, in his *The Jewish Community* (1942); see below, note 213. In 1945, Lopez presented the problem in the same vein when discussing "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire;" cf. notes 213-14, below.

²⁰⁰ On these quarters see Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIIIe siècle*, 129 f.; Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 25 ff.; Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," in *The Cambridge Economic History*, II, 110 f.; and in the different discussions of Byzantine economic life on the basis of the *Επαρχικὸν Βιβλίον*, several of which are frequently referred to in the present volume.

of the Jews) were located²⁰¹ and the increasingly intensive shift thither of the city's economic enterprise²⁰² argue against a ghetto-like conception of the Jewish quarter.²⁰³ There was, indeed, hardly any odium attached to that neighborhood. The much overemphasized report of Benjamin of Tudela on the Christian ill-feeling toward the Jews of the quarter, on account of the malodorous liquids the Jewish tanners used to spill onto the streets,²⁰⁴ has no bearing on the status of the quarter as such.²⁰⁵ A century later, the self-same section of the city, by then adopted by the Genoese, exhaled the same unbearable odor of tanned leather, causing undoubtedly no lesser complaints from the afflicted neighbors.²⁰⁶ In general, however, the quarter impressed both Benjamin and Villhar-

²⁰¹ Speaking of the thirteenth-century situation in the district, Bratianu does not see much difference between its picturesquely cosmopolitan character then and the variety of costumes and ethnic types for which the Galata bridge (connecting that district with Istanbul) was famous in modern times. Cf. his *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 105.

²⁰² Bratianu, *op. cit.*, 109, 154, and *passim*.

²⁰³ See above, note 199.

²⁰⁴ See Benjamin's *Sefer Massa'oth*, ed. Asher, Hebrew Section, 23 f., Eng. tr., 55 f. Cf. further the English translation and comments in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 43, 47, 231 (No. 182). For the sake of easy reference, the Hebrew text of Benjamin's report from Constantinople is reproduced verbatim below, 144 f., note 221.

²⁰⁵ One cannot escape the feeling, on careful perusal of Benjamin's paragraph on the Jews in the capital, that the traveler received his information from the *ūmanim shel meshī*, i.e., the skilled craftsmen manufacturing silk garments. Such information fell on favorable ground, for Benjamin shared apparently with many ancient and medieval Jews of the upper classes (and with the Jewish Halakhah) an intense bias against the tanning profession. He was, on the other hand, genuinely impressed by the skill, social standing and high intellectual achievement of the silk garment manufacturers. He also sang the praises of their confrères in Thebes: *ומשמ שני ימים לטיבש עיר גדולה ובה כמו אלפים יהודים. והם האומנים הטובים לעשות בגדי משי וארגמן בארץ היונים. ובהם חכמים גדולים במשנה ואין כמותם בכל ארץ ויון חוץ ממדינת קושטנטינופוליס* (ed. Asher, 16 f., 47).

In fact, Benjamin sometimes refers to the said artisans simply as *the Jews* (both with regard to those in Thebes and those of Constantinople). Thus, when enumerating the different groups in the Constantinopolitan community, Benjamin lists, next to the scholars and communal leaders, the "craftsmen in silk, many merchants and numerous rich men." The tanners are not included. They are referred to in passing only, when deploring the difficult situation into which *the* [above] Jews have allegedly been plunged by the annoying practice of the tanners. Benjamin is glad to realize that, in spite of the fact that the tanners have provoked the Greeks to "hate the Jews, good and bad alike" (the "bad" ones being the tanners, of course), "they, *the Jews* (*hēm hay-yehūdīm*), are rich and good men." See on it my "In the Footsteps of Benjamin of Tudela" (Hebrew), in honor of Professor Y. (F.) Baer.

On the high social standing of skilled silk craftsmen, as against the low rating of the tanner in Jewish society, see the pertinent remarks of Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, 166 f., 318 f. (notes).

²⁰⁶ Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 106. Bratianu adds that the air of Florence in the "Trecento" was similarly polluted by the odor of tanned leather.

douin by its wealth and beauty,²⁰⁷ and in the thirteenth century the Genoese did not consider it beneath their dignity to look up to the place as if it were "another Genoa."²⁰⁸ Even at the very time of Benjamin's twelfth-century visit to the local Jews, the quarter was suggested as a suitable choice for a Genoese colony; it possibly contained already then a considerable Genoese population.²⁰⁹

On the other hand, evidence is available of scattered Jewish groups all over the capital.²¹⁰ Later generations of Constantinopolitan Jews insistently argued the existence since Byzantine times of Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, and dwellings in various sections of the "God-guarded City."²¹¹ There is, indeed, no reason to relegate the wide-range topography of Jewish quarters in Constantinople, as reconstructed by Galanté, to a development following the Latin conquest and rule on the Bosphorus in the thirteenth century.²¹² The conclusion cogently commends itself, then, that the area which quite naturally impressed Benjamin as the Jewish quarter, because of its considerable Jewish population, was merely a *migrash* (the common ground) of a guild or two—the silk garment manufacturers' guild, say, and the guild of the tanners.²¹³ The Jewish denomination of these craftsmen turned the quarter *ipso facto*,

²⁰⁷ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 43, 231 (Benjamin); 43, 242 (Villhardouin). See also the last quotation from Benjamin in note 205, above. Cf. further Bratianu, *op. cit.*, 89; Starr, *Romania*, 25, 33; and below, 148.

²⁰⁸ Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 89 f.; Lopez, *Storia delle Colonie Genovesi nel Mediterraneo*, 287.

²⁰⁹ Bratianu, *op. cit.*

²¹⁰ See A. Galanté's chapters on "Faubourgs et Quartiers" in both *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 23 ff., and *Histoire de Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 49 ff. On the synagogues in the imperial capital, see the first-cited book, 28 ff., and *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 162 ff., as well as the brief extract on *Les Synagogues d'Istanbul*. Cf. further, Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 119 ff., 204 ff.

²¹¹ Cf., for instance, the petition submitted to the Sublime Porte in 1694, requesting the permission to rebuild the synagogues which were consumed by flames during the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks; Galanté, *Documents officiels turcs concernant les Juifs de Turquie*, 51 f., and *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 31. Incidentally, among the destroyed synagogues there was one which originally belonged to the textile guild. Cf. Galanté's comment, *Documents*, 51, note 3.

²¹² This seems to be the procedure adopted by Starr, *Romania*, 25 f.: "At the time of the Latins' entry [1204] the Jewish population was not permitted to reside in the capital, but only in a designated quarter. . . . Following the Latin interlude (for which there are no data on the subject), we find Jews residing on both sides of the Golden Horn, in various parts of the city proper." A full-scale discussion of the problem cannot, of course, be included in this connection. See above, note 198.

²¹³ Cf. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, I, 365 (the reference in Starr, *Romania*, 33, note 1, should be corrected accordingly!). "The continued development of the guild system in the Byzantine Empire [says Professor Baron] . . . , inevitably stimulated

through the already-mentioned characteristic interplay of religio-ethnic and professional factors, into a Jewish neighborhood *par excellence*.

THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH RESIDENCE

Much as with other groups, these guilds, too, were denied, for reasons of occupational-administrative control, the right of organized residence in other sections of the capital.²¹⁴ Vague reminiscences of anti-Jewish restrictions in the far-off past²¹⁵ and the daily nuisance of trips across the waters into the city's markets²¹⁶ may have imparted to the twelfth-century stranger from Spain a sense of actual segregation. All this does not indicate in any way the absence of other Jewish guilds and individuals elsewhere in the capital, with whom Benjamin failed to come in contact. Nor does it point to a forced or voluntary concentration of all Constantinopolitan Jewry in one quarter alone or even prove the solely Jewish character of the specific quarter which Benjamin did visit.

the Jews to organize along occupational lines. . . . Such [Jewish corporations] are, indeed, clearly implied in Benjamin of Tudela's description of the Jewish craftsmen in Constantinople and elsewhere in the Balkans." Cf. further his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, 171 (and note 24).

See also Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byz. Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 24 ff. Lopez, who dates the *Book of the Prefect* early in the tenth century, finds no mention there of Jewish guilds. He assumes that the Comneni dynasty "bestowed official tolerance, if not full recognition, to a Jewish guild" (p. 24). See, however, my excursus below, 176 f., note 28.

For a later period see Starr, *Romania*, 28 ff., esp. 30.

²¹⁴ This is how I understand Benjamin's statement (see below, note 221, and our English quotation on p.146) that "the Jews do not live among them [i.e., among the Greeks] inside the city, for they have been transferred to the other side of the Strait." Such restrictions were part of an established pattern governing the privileges of foreign merchant colonies. Benjamin's misleading usage of the term "*the Jews*" (this is the correct translation of the text, and not just "Jews," as in Starr!) is in keeping with the tenor of the whole passage the way it was explained above, note 205; he had mainly the members of the silk garment manufacturers' guild in mind.

²¹⁵ The expulsion of the Jews from Constantinople has often been postulated in connection with the confiscation of a Jewish synagogue in the Copper Market (*χαλκοπυργία*) in the time of Theodosius II (434-35). Cf., for instance, Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 80; Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 204; Starr, "Byzantine Jewry on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (565-638)," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, XV (1935), 281 and note 4. Relying on H. Leclercq (in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie et de Liturgie*, ed. F. Cabrol, II, 1393 f.), Starr emphasizes the extreme congestion from which the capital was suffering at that time. Cf. also Starr's *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 43.

This view was subjected most recently to sober reevaluation by Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III (2nd ed.), 232 f., note 10, and refuted on both factual and methodological grounds.

²¹⁶ Cf. Benjamin's *Itinerary*, as quoted in Hebrew in note 221, below, and in English, p. 146. See further below, 172.

As elsewhere, the external history of the Karaites of Constantinople is identical with that of the general Jewish community, no matter in what section of the city they lived.²¹⁷ It is fair to assume that, just as they are mentioned alongside the Rabbanites in what was presented as the "Jewish quarter" beyond the waters,²¹⁸ so they were to be found occupying houses and plying their trade and craft alongside other Rabbanite groups, whatever their topographical location in or around the imperial capital. In fact, if there is any merit to the interesting folk-etymology which derives the later place-name *Qaraköy* (=Black Village), on the Galata waterfront, from *Qarayköy* (i.e., Karaite Village), we shall have been given an example of a popular recollection of Karaite settlement beyond the alleged confines of the original Jewish quarter.²¹⁹

These findings are, of course, decisive for the evaluation of the juridical, social and economic status of the Jew, whether Rabbanite or Karaite, in Middle Byzantine Constantinople. They also will have to be taken in consideration when an attempt is made to estimate the numerical strength of the capital's Jewish population, including the Karaites therein.²²⁰ They are however, of little assistance in the reconstruction of daily life in the Jewish quarters. So far as the actual picture of Constantinopolitan Jewish life is concerned, the well-known description of the Jewish quarter across the Golden Horn, as offered by Benjamin in his *Itinerary*, has no peer.²²¹ A *partial* description it is—so it

²¹⁷ On the Karaites of Constantinople see Galanté, *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 59 f.; *idem*, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, II, 176 ff. Galanté's main contribution is in his familiarity with the scene and in the topographic (and, later, also communal) details he supplies.

²¹⁸ See below, 146, and note 232.

²¹⁹ See on it Galanté, *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 59; *idem*, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, II, 176 f. (Cf., however, in the same work, I, 50, note 1, where the suggestion is made that *Qaraköy* could be derived perhaps from the family-name of the sixteenth-century Jewess Esther *Kyra*.) See further Starr, *Romania*, 26.

Needless to say, the above etymology is not cited here as *proof* of Karaite settlement in that particular section of Galata. Rather, it is important as an echo of popular reminiscences regarding the spread of Karaites beyond the limited area described by Benjamin (and situated in a different part of Galata).

²²⁰ See our discussion of population estimates further in this chapter, 154 ff.

²²¹ The following is Benjamin's description of the Jewish *migrash* outside of Constantinople proper (collated from ed. Asher, 23 f., and ed. M. N. Adler, 16 f.; reprinted in Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael bag-Gōlah*, II, Bk. 1, 217; Dubnow, *Dibrē Yemē 'Am 'Olam*, IV, 261 f.; and in several other books of Jewish history): אין זיהודים בחוץ המדינה [ר"ל בקושטא] ביניהם [=בין היוונים] כי העבירו אותם אחר זרוע הים חרוע ים שופיא מקיף עליהם מצד אחד ואינם יכולים לצאת אלא דרך ים לסחור עם בעלי המדינה. ושם כמו אלפים יהודים רבנים. ומהם כמו ת"ק קראים בצד אחד וביניהם מחיצה. ובין הרבנים תלמידי חכמים ובראשם ר' אבטליון הרב ור' עובדיה ור' אהרן בכור שורו ור' יוסף שיר גירו ור' אליקים הפרנס. וביניהם אומנים

follows from the present discussion—characteristic only of a *part* of Constantinople's Jewry. It depicts, as we have assumed, the rich guild of silk garment manufacturers and the guild of tanners; the latter, as apparently customary also in the Italian cities, lived close to the textile experts, blanketing the neighborhood with the sickening smell of their tanning solution.²²² Yet, however incomplete and one-sided, Benjamin's is the only description available. It supplies, in addition, precious (though problematic) population figures, and quotes names and titles of local personalities. It, further, allows us a fleeting glimpse into the Karaite section of the *migrash*, briefly alluding to Karaite-Rabbabite relations. Finally, it provides us with the only statistical item on the Empire's Karaites that is known to date.

To these last-mentioned data we shall now turn our attention.

ACROSS THE GOLDEN HORN

The Karaite section of the *migrash* formed an integral part of the Jewish guilds' quarter. This was located since the tenth or the eleventh centuries (i.e., coinciding with the appearance of the first Karaites in the city) in a suburb named Péra or Stenon, across the Golden Horn.²²³ The adjacent Jewish cemetery probably served both communities.²²⁴

With the aid of a detail included in the Russian *Itinerary* of Anthony of Novgorod, Starr thought to have fixed the precise area of the Jewish quarter as adjoining modern Cassim Pasha.²²⁵ One wonders, however, to what extent this finding is reliable or even helpful. Cassim Pasha,

של משי וטחרים הרבה ועשירים גדולים. ואין מנחחים שם ליהודי לרכוב על סוס חרץ מר' שלמה המצרי שהוא רופא למלך ועל ידיו מוצאים היהודים ריח גדול בגלותם. כי בגלות כבוד הם יושבים, ורוב שנאה שביניהם ע"י הבורסקין עובדי העורות שמשליכין המים המסונפים שלהם בחוצות לפני פתח ביתם ומלכלכין גרש היהודים, ועל כן שונאים היוונים את היהודים בין טוב ובין רע ומכבידן עלם עליהם ומכין אותם בחוצות ומעבידן אותם בפרך. אבל הם היהודים עשירים ואנשים טובים בעלי חסד ומצות וטובלים עול גלות בעין יפה. ושם המקום שרדים בו היהודים—פירא.

²²² Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerces génois*, 106 f.

²²³ Cf. A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, Index, s.v. "Jews;" A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 57 f., II, 176; A. Danon, "The Karaites in European Turkey," *JQR* (N.S.), XV (1925), 290, 300; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 43 (and the regesta thereto); *idem*, *Romania*, 25 ff. Cf. further Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, esp. 89; Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine*, esp. 304; M. Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*, 22.

²²⁴ The "Jews' cemetery," across Péra, is mentioned by Nikéas Khoniates in reference to the beheading of Andronikos Dukas in 1185; See Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire* 239, No. 190. Cf. Danon, *op. cit.*; Galanté, *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 26 ff., 60; *idem*, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 176, 181; *idem*, *Documents officiels turcs*, 60 ff.

²²⁵ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 43, 240 (No. 191).

Péra and Galata form, strictly speaking, three contiguous boroughs, Péra being situated on a hill which, on one side, dominates Cassim Pasha (on the Golden Horn) and, on the other side, overlooks Galata (on the Marmara).²²⁶ All scholars, however, are unanimous in stressing the fluidity of the above names, especially when transmitted by foreign travelers.²²⁷

Péra (*Πέρα*)—meaning in Greek “beyond,” “across,” “further”—served actually as a general designation of that part of present-day Istanbul which faced medieval Constantinople from across the Golden Horn. It thus was frequently invoked both with regard to Péra proper (Beyoğlu) and with regard to Galata. Strangers in particular were apt to confuse the two names or use them in their diaries and itineraries interchangeably or in a perplexingly vague manner.²²⁸ In fact, it is rather problematic whether a distinction between Galata and Péra was at all existent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some scholars doubt it even with regard to the thirteenth century. They would shift the problem from topography to linguistics and present “Péra” as the name preferred by the Latins, while “Galata” was preferable to the Greeks—both apparently referring to the same borough.²²⁹

The earliest specific mention of the topographic location of the Karaite dwellings there stems from the second half of the twelfth century. It was then that the Spanish Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, visited the imperial capital. Marvelling at the magnificence of the great metropolis, he noted, we recall, that “the Jews,” by which mainly the members of the silk garment manufacturers’ guild were intended,²³⁰

do not live among them [i.e., among the Greeks] inside the city, for they have been transferred to the other side of the Strait. . . , and they cannot go out to do business with the townspeople except by crossing the sea. . . . The place in which the Jews live is called “Péra.”²³¹

In this quarter, Benjamin noticed,

there are about two thousand Rabbanite Jews and about five hundred Karaites on one side [*or*: in one section], and between them there is a partition.²³²

²²⁶ Galanté, *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance*, 24.

²²⁷ Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, esp. 95 f.; Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 57.

²²⁸ Galanté, *op. cit.*

²²⁹ Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, 448; Lopez, *Storia delle Colonie Genovesi nel Mediterraneo*, 216, note 1.

²³⁰ Cf. above, note 214.

²³¹ See the references and the Hebrew text, above, note 221.

²³² Cf. the previous note. For the meaning of the Hebrew *šad* (=side) in our context see note 236, below. Cf. also above, 35, note 23, and the discussion of population data further in this chapter, 161.

The fence or wall separating the Karaite part of the quarter from that of the Rabbanites may have been a later addition, the result of unhappy experience in partisan quarrels and calendar feuds. Indeed, in a later stage of this study an attempt will be made to place that development in a context of specific events.²³³ However, except for the later erection of the partition, there is no reason to suppose that the situation during the century-and-a-half or two centuries of Karaite history on the banks of the Bosphorus, prior to Benjamin's visit, was substantially different from that which he encountered.

Indeed, had Benjamin failed to leave a record of this Karaite-Rabbanite proximity of dwellings, we should have been forced to presuppose it, consistent with the "basic premises" laid down earlier in this volume. Moreover, we shall have to assume such proximity also for all other localities which contained a Karaite population and of which no similar topographic data are available.²³⁴ This, in fact, is one of the reasons why the non-Jewish observers failed to discern any distinction between the different occupants of the Jewish quarter. Accordingly, they refer to it always in a general way, such as "the Jewish homes,"²³⁵ "the Jews' quarter,"²³⁶ or the "Juerie."²³⁷

As neighbors, the Karaites shared the lot of their Rabbanite brethren, for better or worse. Thus, their wooden houses, too, were presumably consumed by flames in 1077, when the rebel John Bryennius

hurled fire on the houses stretching from St. Panteleemon to the highest parts of the Stenon. The flame caught on and consumed all but a few of the houses. . . . Especially

²³³ Cf. below, Chapter VII. See also my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 34 ff.

²³⁴ For Attaleia, see Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 44. The Jewish quarter in that city is mentioned by Ibn Baṭūṭa about the year 1330. It was very likely the same area which harbored a Jewish population as early as the eleventh century, when the events communicated in the Genizah epistle of 1028 occurred (see above, 46 ff.). Cf. the reference in Starr, 186, note to No. 128. There is, again, no reason to ascribe a ghetto-like quality to the Attaleian Jewish quarter. On the problem of Jewish dwellings in Thessalonica, see below, 149 f.

²³⁵ So Attaleiates (see note 238, below).

²³⁶ See the excerpt from Anthony of Novgorod in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 240, No. 191. It is interesting to note that Anthony uses the same expression that was used (in Hebrew) by Benjamin to denote the Jewish quarter. It literally means "side" (*po strane*; פל צד), but actually denotes a "section" of the city. Cf. also above, note 232. See further Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 98, note 2.

²³⁷ See the excerpt from Villehardouin in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 242, No. 196. The general area, i.e., the Stenon, is called here Estanor. Cf. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, I, 57.

of the Jewish ones, since they were built of wood, none escaped the rush of the flames.²³⁸

Twenty-six years later, their dwellings, too, like those of the Rabbanites, were turned to shambles when, in the winter of 1203–4, the city was subjected to the fury of the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade.²³⁹ However, before setting the “Juerie” aflame, the invaders had enough time to realize that it was a “mult bone vile et mult riche.”²⁴⁰

ON EUROPEAN SOIL

No definitive data are available on the existence of a Karaite community in the second-largest city of the Empire and the greatest Byzantine commercial center on European soil, Thessalonica.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, we shall be justified in interpreting the scanty general references at our disposal as indirectly pointing to the fact that Karaites did take advantage of the new commercial possibilities in that area.²⁴²

Scholars generally agree that Tobias ben Eliezer, the Rabbanite homilist and anti-Karaite polemicist from Castoria,²⁴³ was present in Thessalonica in the last decade of the eleventh century.²⁴⁴ It was there that he might have come in personal contact with the Karaites. This

²³⁸ Cf. the account of Attaleiates as excerpted in English translation by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 202, No. 150.

²³⁹ Cf. Starr, *Romania*, 25.

²⁴⁰ So Villehardouin (cf. note 237, above).

²⁴¹ On that city see Ch. Diehl, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 10 f., 108; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 24; *idem*, *Byzantine Civilization*, 205 f.; *idem*, in *Cambridge Economic History*, II, 97 f.; Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine*, 136 f. Cf. also the basic works of O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique*, and *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*.

²⁴² The most important economic enterprise of Thessalonica was the annual St. Demetrius fair, when Russian merchants also would visit the city. Indeed, in a text published by Mann and thought by him to be referring to Thessalonica (*Texts and Studies*, I, 45 ff.; cf. also II, 287), Jewish merchants from Russia are explicitly mentioned. Cf. also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 182 ff., No. 125. Starr (184, 243) suggested, however, that the capital rather than Thessalonica was the scene of that Karaite-Rabbanite feud. See more on the problem later on in this study (Chapter VII) and in my essay in *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 33 ff.

²⁴³ On Tobias ben Eliezer, see especially Chapters VI–VIII of the present study.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Mann, “Messianic Movements in the Time of the Early Crusades” (Hebrew), *Hattekūfah*, XXIII (1925), 256, note 6; *idem*, *Texts and Studies*, I, 46, II, 287; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 208, under (e). There is no proof, however, that Tobias ben Eliezer settled permanently in Thessalonica, nor even that he resided there at regular intervals. The text at hand is associated with the well-known messianic movement of 1096. We have no inkling of the Karaites’ share in that movement.

encounter might have prompted him to take issue with them on standard matters of Law in his midrashic commentary on the Bible.²⁴⁵

The fact that Benjamin of Tudela failed to note the existence of Karaites in Thessalonica on his visit to the city in the 1160's does not necessarily contradict the above assumption.²⁴⁶ If my understanding of Benjamin's special interest in the silk garment industry, such as he manifested in Péra and Thebes, is correct,²⁴⁷ we shall have found the key to a solution of the problem. It seems that here, too, as in Constantinople, Benjamin did not report on all Thessalonican Jewry but on Thessalonica's Jewish silk garment manufacturers' guild, apparently the third-largest Jewish establishment of its kind in the Empire. Again, as in Constantinople, the question is closely related to that of Jewish dwellings in the city.

It has been stressed frequently that the Jews were not restricted to residence in a specific section of Thessalonica. This we learn from the query addressed to the patriarch of Constantinople by Eustathius, some time after the latter was called upon to occupy the patriarchal see of Thessalonica in 1175. Eustathius complains that "the Hebrews were permitted to spread out" all over the city.²⁴⁸ Now, although the new patriarch appears to be surprised by such practice, the practice itself was a matter of fact to his interlocutors. It does not even seem to have been of recent date; Eustathius attributes its development to "the incumbency of the saintly patriarchs who preceded" him (and not to

²⁴⁵ See Chapters VI–VIII, below, and, briefly, above, 33 f.

²⁴⁶ The following text is collated from ed. Asher, 18 f., and ed. Adler, 13 (compare also, e.g., in Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael Bag-Gôlah*, II, Bk. 1, 216, or, in English version, in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 230): לעיר [סלוניקי]... והיא עיר גדולה... ומשם... לאדו ובה כמו ח"ק יהודים. ושם הרב ר' שמואל ובניו חלמירי חכמים והוא שם ממנה על היהודים חתח יד המלך ר' שבתי חתנו ר' אליה ר' מיכאל. ושם גלות על היהודים והם מתעסקים במלאכת המשי Cf. further, Tafrali, *Théssalonique au quatorzième siècle*, 17 f., 39 f.; J. Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, I, 74–88, esp. 86 f.; I. S. Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, I, 26; *idem*, *Gedōlē Salōniqi be-Dōrotham*, 2 f. (Intro.)

For later periods in Thessalonican Jewish history, cf. Starr, *Romania*, 77 ff.; Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 126 ff.; Tafrali, *Théssalonique au quatorzième siècle*, 86; *idem*, *Topographie de Théssalonique*, 130; the books of Emmanuel and Nehama listed above; P. Charanis, "A Note on the Population and Cities of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century," *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume*, esp. 140 f.; F. Dölger, "Zur Frage des jüdischen Anteils an der Bevölkerung Thessalonikas im XIV. Jahrhundert," *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume*, 129 ff.; M. S. Goodblatt, *Jewish Life in Turkey in the XVIth Century*, 8 ff.

²⁴⁷ See above, 141, note 205.

²⁴⁸ Cf. the English excerpt in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 237 (No. 184), and Starr's comments there, 43 f. See further Tafrali, *Théssalonique au quatorzième siècle*, 40, note 1.

his immediate predecessor). In fact, even Eustathius himself was aroused to action not so much by the sight of the Jews' omnipresence in the city as, rather, by the fact that they had occupied Christian houses which were "decorated with religious pictures."²⁴⁹

In the light of the above and of our previous discussion regarding Constantinopolitan Jewry, the five hundred Jews listed by Benjamin for Thessalonica hardly constitute the sum total of the city's Jewish population. Rather, they form a group which had all the earmarks of a guild or of a government-controlled organization "engaged in the manufacture of silken garments."²⁵⁰ Headed by a royal appointee²⁵¹ and subjected to the status of *galūth*, i.e., of an *alien colony*,²⁵² they most probably were concentrated, much as were their counterparts in Péra, in a common *migrash*, with the customary privileges and restrictions. It is in that *migrash* also that Benjamin apparently visited the artisans and their leaders and received from them the information he inscribed in his *Itinerary*.

Thus, if there were any Karaites in Thessalonica—and, though we have no clear-cut evidence for it, the assumption is most plausible—they apparently, for one reason or other, were not members in the silk garment manufacturers' guild. Accordingly, they also did not live in the special borough allotted to the guild (and visited by Benjamin), but spread out, with other Jews of different trades and professions, over various parts of the city.²⁵³

ADRIANOPOLITAN ORIGINS

Another hub of European Byzantine commerce was Adrianople, the city which was to become the most important and most creative center

²⁴⁹ Starr, *op. cit.*, 237.

²⁵⁰ See the Hebrew text above, note 246. Cf. also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 17, 29.

²⁵¹ See the text, note 246, and the comments of Starr, *op. cit.*, 40.

²⁵² The term *galūth* in our context as well as in Benjamin's report from Péra (note 221) does not, so it seems, mean "Exile" but "the status of aliens." This is also the interpretation of Starr who translates "restrictions" (in Thessalonica) and "alien status" (in Péra). Cf. *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 230 and 231. See, however, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), III, 195.

²⁵³ The fact, noticed by Baron (*Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 273), that "remarkably there was not a single Karaite in Salonica . . . during the early sixteenth century" needs, of course, an explanation. Such an explanation will be attempted in my future "History of the Karaites in Turkey, Russia and Poland," against the background of the unique growth of Jewish Salonica at the expense of (and in rivalry with) Jewish Constantinople in which the Karaites were concentrated. At any rate, I hardly think that Professor Baron called upon this sixteenth-century development as proof of the nonexistence of Karaites in Thessalonica 400 years earlier.

of Karaism during the period of Ottoman consolidation, prior to the Turkish conquest of Constantinople.²⁵⁴ Well known for its market of textiles, the city of Adrianople was a much frequented goal and transit point of the medieval merchant, especially since the thirteenth-century ascendancy of the Genoese traders from Péra.²⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the city did not lie in the path of any of the twelfth- or thirteenth-century Jewish traveler-authors (such as Benjamin, or Petahyah of Regensburg, or al-Ḥarīzī) who would have otherwise enriched, each in his own way and degree of reliability, our knowledge of contemporaneous Jewish life there. The fact is that organized Jewish life in Adrianople is attested to already in the Early Byzantine times; incomparably better known is the later development of local Jewry, when Adrianople served (from 1361 to 1453) as capital of the young Ottoman Sultanate.²⁵⁶ However, not a single mention of Adrianople Jews has so far been yielded by any of the sources dealing with the Middle and Late Byzantine periods.²⁵⁷

Now, there is hardly any justification, the changing political fortunes of the place notwithstanding, for postulating a break in the continuity of Adrianopolitan Jewry from Justinian to Murad. The perseverance in the city, well into modern Turkish times, of a Greek-speaking Rabbanite community center following the Byzantine (Romaniote) synagogue rite of the "Gregos," and the prevalence, to this day, of local Jewish family-names which are plainly of Greek origin give ample proof of such continuity.²⁵⁸ The same is true of the local Karaite group, even after it

²⁵⁴ On the "Adrianopolitan school" in Karaite legal thought, with particular emphasis on the fifteenth-century Bashyachi family, see my "Bashyachi," in *Enšiklopedyah 'Ivrith* (Enc. Hebraica), IX, esp. 960 f.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 119.

²⁵⁶ See on the community of Adrianople and its history, A. Danon, in the *Jewish Enc.*, I, 213b–215b; Assaf-Benayahū, in *Enšiklopedyah 'Ivrith*, I, 565–68. The legendary blood libel connected with the name of the city must be dated some time in the Late Byzantine period. Starr (*Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 235) was inclined to attribute it to Latin influence after 1204.

On the early Ottoman period see Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 5, 12, 14, and passim.

²⁵⁷ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 235, suggested that "the absence of any reference to Adrianople before 1361 may be merely accidental."

²⁵⁸ Danon, in *Jewish Enc.*, I, esp. 213b f. Danon offers examples of family-names and of common names in use among Adrianopolitan Jewry; they are obviously a residue of the Byzantine period. See on it, in general Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 209 ff. and 216 ff., where a glossary is given. On the Romaniote rite (*Mahazōr Romania*), see Rosanes, *op. cit.*, 206 ff.; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 65 ff.

was transferred by the sultan's order of 1455 from Adrianople to Constantinople:²⁵⁹ the Graeco-Karaite jargon remained unimpaired despite the unusually close social and spiritual rapprochement between the Adrianopolitan Karaites and the early fifteenth-century Sephardic immigrants to Turkey. This persistence of the Graeco-Karaite is especially striking when compared with the fast and complete victory of Ladino over the dialects spoken earlier by Byzantino-Turkish Rabbinites.²⁶⁰ It shows Karaism's deep roots in the Byzantine Greek environment and a pre-Turkish date of the movement in Adrianople.²⁶¹

In short: The spread of Karaism into Adrianople, some time before the Turkish advance in Europe, may be taken for granted. It is quite plausible to postulate that the close commercial relations on the Péra-Adrianople line in general,²⁶² involving also Jewish (Rabbanite and Karaite) merchants, played a growing role in the process. This brings to mind the even busier traffic between Péra and Caffa (in the Crimea), which similarly may have had a share in the growth of Karaism in the Crimean Peninsula.²⁶³

GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

We have pointed so far to the existence of Karaite communities in nine or ten cities within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire and to

²⁵⁹ See on it Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 292, note 15, and the sources offered there. Thus, owing to Mehmet II's policy of repopulating the desolated capital on the Bosphorus, the center of Karaite life shifted back to Constantinople.

²⁶⁰ See on it below, 196.

²⁶¹ This is not the opinion of Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 292. Mann assumes that the Adrianople Karaite community came into being *after* the conquest of the city by the Turks: "In common with the Rabbanites, the Karaites must have left persecuting Byzantium for the part of the Balkans under the rule of the more tolerant Turks." Without entering into a discussion of the factual basis and the merits of the "persecution argument" versus, say, the economic incentive in settling in the capital of the young Sultanate, the objection must be made that we have no proof of such large-scale exodus as supposed by Mann. Nor is, for instance, Mordecai Comtino, who had to leave Constantinople and settle in Adrianople, so happy about it. Cf. the complaint in his commentary on Ibn Ezra's *Yesöd Mōrā*: בשביל בארץ נכריה בעיר אדריאנופולי. At any rate, all signs point to the prior existence of organized Karaite life in Adrianople *in a Byzantine environment*. It goes without saying that, following the rise of the city to political and economic importance under the Ottomans, the Karaite center, much like that of the Rabbanites, must have correspondingly grown in importance and numbers.

²⁶² See above, note 255.

²⁶³ On the Péra-Caffa line see, e.g., Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 113 ff. The hereby suggested thesis on the interdependence of the growth of Crimean Karaism and the Péra commerce will be discussed in my projected "History of the Karaites in Turkey, Russia and Poland." There also the role of Adrianopolitan Karaism will be analyzed at greater length.

their settlement in adjoining Armenia. Whether any Karaites settled in other localities on imperial soil is, of course, a matter for conjecture. Indeed, since the latest of the three Genizah documents mentioned above²⁶⁴—the letter written by Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople some time prior to 1048—proudly refers to “all the communities in the Land of Edom [=Byzantium], whether near or far,”²⁶⁵ the impression is gained that before 1048 there were many more Karaite groups organized in the Empire besides those of Attaleia, Cyprus, Constantinople, Nicomedia, Amaseia(?), Adrianople(?), Thessalonica, Gangra (Gagry?), Trebizond and Edessa. There is, however, no way of identifying them on the basis of sources presently available.²⁶⁶

Considering the general paucity of information pertinent to Byzantine Karaite history, the absence of source material on the subject is, of course, not decisive. Neither, for that matter, does the silence of the *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela, our chief record of population data for Byzantium, prove anything with regard to existence or nonexistence of Karaites in smaller localities. As already noted, this record lists only the sectarian communities of Constantinople and Cyprus. Its failure to include the lesser Karaite settlements, too, comes almost as no surprise. After all, it fails also to mention Karaites when reporting on Thessalonica, where their presence was very probable; nor does it cite Attaleia at all, although the existence of Karaite and Rabbanite groups there is a proven fact.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Cf. Chapter I of this study, 51 ff., and the notes thereto.

²⁶⁵ See above, 53, note 71.

²⁶⁶ In his recent report of a visit to the present-day Karaite community of Istanbul (Constantinople), S. Szyszman takes it for granted that “Asia Minor and the Balkans harbored in the past a great number of flourishing Karaite communities, established in approximately eighty (!) localities.” He has it on the authority of I. Yefeth-Hacar who read about it in the *Sefer Zikkarōn* (=Memorial Book) of the Istanbul community. This MS, however, once preserved in the local Karaite synagogue, was taken to Cairo by the chief of the community, Abraham Kohen, on his appointment to spiritual leadership of the Karaites in the Egyptian capital. The fate of the MS since Kohen’s death (in 1933) remains unknown. Szyszman’s efforts during his visit to Cairo in 1953 to find clues to Kohen’s library were of no avail. Cf. his “Communauté Karaïte d’Istamboul,” *VT*, VI (1956), 310.

It is obvious that so long as no documents are available to support the figures given orally (though, no doubt, with the best of intention and sincerity) by the local leaders, our appraisal of the population strength of Byzantine Karaism must remain cautious. Moreover, there is no indication whatsoever that the said Memorial Book dealt with the early (i.e., Byzantine) phase of the movement. Rather, it stands to reason that the Turkish period alone was covered, and possibly only the relatively modern part thereof.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 234 f., Excursus E, for a list of communities not visited by Benjamin of Tudela. Benjamin did not visit Asia Minor at all.

The inadequacy of Benjamin's *Itinerary* as guide to the *geographical* expansion of Karaism on Byzantine soil is matched by its inadequacy as a record of the *numerical* strength of Byzantine Karaite population at the end of the sect's formative process in Byzantium. In the first place, Benjamin neglected to include whole provinces in his Byzantine itinerary; he has failed thus to visit seven out of the ten localities which we have listed above as containing Karaite populations. Of the remaining three localities, to be sure, he mentioned specifically merely two as seats of Karaite colonies. Further, Benjamin appended actual population figures to as many as twenty-five out of the twenty-eight communities he visited. However, he cared to register a figure for only one of the two Karaite groups which he has mentioned. Last but not least: even that single figure (of 500), offered for the Karaite group in Constantinople, hardly reflected the sum total of the Karaite inhabitants in the imperial capital. Rather, as we assumed earlier in this chapter, it denoted merely the Karaite guild-membership concentrated in one *migrash* in the Péra suburb; the number of other Karaites in the city as a whole was not disclosed.²⁶⁸

Now, the above comments do not intend to detract from the importance of this one and only statistical entry which the Spaniard's travelogue has contributed to our knowledge of Byzantine Karaism. Its very availability, its uniqueness and its dealing with the Empire's capital, in which the largest Jewish (Rabbanite and Karaite) community was located, become even more precious when compared with the absence of such information from, say, Fustât-Cairo, the capital of Egypt and the seat of that country's largest and richest Karaite community.²⁶⁹ Moreover, Benjamin's statistical item from Péra may serve as key to *comparative* inquiries. Through it the opportunity is afforded to gauge the *relative* standing of Karaism in the Constantinopolitan Jewish society and to measure the position of the Karaite community on the Bosphorus against the numerical strength of her sectarian sister-communities in the Islamic world of that time. Such comparisons will eventually help

²⁶⁸ Cf. the discussion above, 144.

²⁶⁹ While reporting the total of Rabbanite Jewish taxpayers in Fustât-Cairo (see below, note 291), Benjamin failed to register the number of Karaites there or, for that matter, their very existence in the Egyptian capital. Characteristically, with all the wealth of documents concerning Egyptian Jewry and the Karaites in its midst, the earliest actual figure of Karaites as compared with the number of their Rabbanite compatriots in Egypt belongs to the late fifteenth century. It is then (1488) that 'Obadyah of Bertinoro found in the Egyptian capital 150 Karaite families out of a total of 700 Jewish families. See the references below, 162, notes 291-93.

shape a general impression, whatever its worth, regarding the approximate number of all Karaite inhabitants in the Byzantine Empire.

BENJAMIN'S STATISTICS—A CRITIQUE

The proper utilization of the *Itinerary*—even of one single figure therein—demands, of course, of the student to take a stand on the oft-discussed problems arising from the peculiarities of the text. These problems pertain to four aspects of the value of Benjamin's figures:

a) their *textual value*—considering the many statistical disparities caused by variants in the extant manuscripts of the travelogue;

b) their *numerical value*—i.e., regarding whether these figures denote total numbers of souls, taxpayers alone, a total of families, or, finally, any and all of the three categories used intermittently, depending on the country and circumstances;

c) their *statistical value*—i.e., whether they are Benjamin's own computations, the estimates of communal leaders or of informants in a position to know, figures taken from taxpayers' rolls and community lists, or, sometimes, wild guesses of enthusiastic (yet incompetent) interlocutors; and

d) the *evidential value* of hearsay data—i.e., regarding the extent to which the information collected by Benjamin on localities which he did not visit personally may be at all reliable.²⁷⁰

Now, the first and the fourth points have little bearing on the Byzantine scene. So far as the paragraphs on the Jewry of Byzantium are concerned, we encounter (except for one case) no serious flaws in the textual transmission of the *Itinerary*, such as are known, for instance, with regard to figures in the passages on Cairo, Aleppo, Jerusalem or Baghdād.²⁷¹ Nor do we have to exert our energy on sifting unduly exaggerated hearsay evidence. On the contrary! Would that Benjamin *had* had the curiosity, when deciding (or being compelled) to skirt Asia Minor on his travels,

²⁷⁰ The merits and demerits of Benjamin's statistics have been discussed back and forth by practically all students of the Middle ages. Most recently, the problems have been reviewed anew by Baron, when discussing population data of the various Jewish medieval communities. See, for instance, in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 322 f., note 29. Cf. also earlier, Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 35, and the works of Andréadès cited below, 158, note 277.

²⁷¹ The Adler edition of the *Itinerary* has the figure 7000 for Cairo; the Asher edition reads 2000. A similar disparity can be noticed with regard to Aleppo: 5000 (Adler) and 1500 (Asher). Well known is the disparity regarding Jerusalem, where the Hebrew letter *daleth* (possessing the numerical connotation of 4) was easily corrupted to *rēsh* (standing for 200). See on it the comments of Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 284, note 48, IV, 297, note 32. The Baghdād story is one of

to ask his hosts in Péra and on the Aegean Islands about their fellow Jews on the Asiatic shore! Would that he *had* included some hearsay information on Anatolian communities! Scholars would then be able, with due caution, to dispel the darkness enveloping Jewish life in that great Peninsula which, according to our reconstruction, was in the generations preceding Benjamin the scene of decisive population movements and which undoubtedly still harbored in his own time a considerable Karaite population. Lamentably, no such hearsay evidence is offered by the Spanish traveler for the Anatolian or any other Byzantine communities.

On the other hand, the problem which is equally crucial for the population estimates of Byzantine Jewry (including the Karaites in its midst) as well as, say, of the eastern communities is that pertaining to the numerical and statistical value of Benjamin's figures. The solution of that twin problem, one way or the other, must perforce change radically the supposed number, import, and outlook of the Jewries in question. Since the present inquiry is limited to merely one segment of Byzantine Jewish population, no full-length discussion of the matter is warranted in this connection. Suffice it to suggest here some general notions on the subject, deferring the full documentation to my projected study of Byzantine Jewry as a whole.²⁷²

BENJAMIN'S STATISTICS—RULES OF COMPUTATION

He who cares to follow the diligent traveler from Tudela on his unusual journey and to observe him, time and time again, in his even more unusual and praiseworthy effort to secure data on his fellow Jews across the then-known world, cannot escape the impression that the main basis for Benjamin's population estimates in countries he visited personally was information which he received from fairly well informed local leaders. Of course, he may have (and often did) form his own opinion on the size and character of a community, and may have developed some ancillary methods of his own to evaluate a communal situation. This was especially possible during a prolonged stay in one locality or when in a small community he could meet practically the whole adult male population in the synagogue. On the other hand, too

the omission of a single consonant (*mēm*, denoting 40), which made all the the difference between 1000 and 40,000; see Baron, *op. cit.*, III, 276 f., note 32, 284, note 48.

Benjamin's Byzantine figures are, in my opinion, suspect only with regard to Chios. Cf. below, 158, note 277.

²⁷² See above, 140, note 198.

short a stopover in a city may have caused him to accept overcredulously some utterly unreliable guesses from the mouth of accidental Levantine interlocutors.

By and large, however, the figures which Benjamin registered in his *Itinerary* were not of his own computation but those supplied to him by official and, on the whole, reliable communal sources. Obviously, the primary criteria by which Benjamin's official informants arrived at these figures were those underlying community censuses in their countries; they would vary, accordingly, from regime to regime, from East to West. No common yardstick is applicable to all the Jewish communities which Benjamin visited, those living in the Islamic environment and those living under Christian rule.

Taxation—or, more precisely, capitation tax (*jizya*) imposed on able-bodied males—was the basic criterion for the census of “infidel” population in Muslim lands. Hence, the figures which Benjamin procured from local leaders or institutions in the Islamic world denote, without doubt, the adult males who were registered in the capitation tax rolls. Such constituted, as a rule, about one-third of the community; it is, therefore, customary to multiply the given figures by *three* in order to obtain the total estimate of souls for the whole community.²⁷³ Not so in Byzantium. The still-unsolved problem of Jewish taxation will be briefly reviewed in the next chapter.²⁷⁴ Whatever the solution, even the tax called in Byzantium *kephalétiôn*, meaning *capitation* tax, was, unlike the *jizya*, a *family* tax. Hence, wherever taxation was the criterion for the figures supplied to Benjamin by local Byzantine Jewish leaders, the given number must be multiplied by *five*, the customary average for a family, in order to reflect the total of souls in the community.²⁷⁵ The same procedure is correct with regard to those largest localities (such as Thebes, Thessalonica and Constantinople) in which we have assumed Benjamin's contact with the leadership of a guild rather than of the total Jewish population in the place.²⁷⁶ There, too, the figure denoting guild-members must be multiplied by *five*, to include their families in the count. In such cases, however, we shall have to supplement the total

²⁷³ Cf. Strauss [Ashtor], *Töleoth hay-Yehüdīm be-Miṣrayim we-Sūryah*, I, 33. Of course, in small communities, the simplest method was that of estimating the number of males assembled in the synagogue. Benjamin may have, indeed, used sometimes this method. In that case, too, the multiplication by three is a fairly correct way of reaching the total of souls in the community.

²⁷⁴ See below, 182 ff.

²⁷⁵ Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 323, note 29.

²⁷⁶ See above, 140 ff., 150.

by an additional estimate of those Jews in the given city who were not members of the said guilds.²⁷⁷

According to the above-set rules of computation, the total of 8700 (in round figures), which is obtained by adding up the individual numbers registered by Benjamin for twenty-five localities in European and Insular Byzantium, will yield, when multiplied by five, a total of some

²⁷⁷ It is to be noted, however, that Andréadès, who pioneered in Byzantine population studies in general and contributed significantly also to the elucidation of Jewish population data in the Empire, considered Benjamin's figures as denoting the total number of souls. Cf. his important studies, such as "Sur Benjamin de Tudèle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXX (1930), 458 ff.; "The Jews in the Byzantine Empire," *Economic History*, III (1934), esp. 4 f. Cf. further his "Les Juifs et le fisc dans l'Empire byzantin," *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, I, esp. 24 f.; and "La population de l'Empire byzantin," in *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Bulgare*, IX (1935), 117 ff. (presented to the Byzantine Congress in Sofia, 1934). Cf. Baron's critique of Andréadès' opinion, in *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 322 f., note 29. Baron stresses the fact that such "a low estimate of the [Byzantine] Jewish population runs counter to all other known facts."

Andréadès was followed by Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 35 f., who even surpassed the former in his caution regarding the total estimate of Byzantine Jewry (see note 279, below). Starr was especially impressed by Andréadès' argument from the situation in Chios. The eleventh-century imperial charters, assigning the revenues from the *kephalétion* (capitation tax) of the Chios Jews to the Nea Moné monastery, specifically registered a total of fifteen families on the island (Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 197 f., No. 143, 200 f., No. 174, 202 f., No. 151, and notes). However, one century later, Benjamin reported there a figure of 400. "Taking this as a general total [so runs the argument], it represents a fourfold increase, in itself rather unusual, and the rise becomes absolutely incredible if the number be taken to denote families. Hence, barring a textual or other irregularity, we must view Benjamin's figures as estimates of the entire number of Jewish souls."

Now, the above objections are, indeed, well taken. A twenty-seven-fold increase in a matter of one century is undoubtedly out of question. But so is, after all, also the increase by five-and-a-half which will have to be assumed if one is to agree with Andréadès and Starr (dividing 400 by 75, i.e., by the total of Jewish souls on eleventh-century Chios [15 x 5]). As quoted before, Starr himself felt that even his minimum calculation is "in itself rather unusual" and that the possibility of "a textual or other irregularity" must not be excluded. There is no doubt in my mind that, rather than draw far-reaching conclusions regarding the whole Jewish population in the twelfth century from the obviously dubious and, in all events, unusual case of Chios, we ought to suspect the very passage on Chios in Benjamin's *Itinerary*.

A careful check on the numbers of community leaders reported by Benjamin for 23 Byzantine localities may prove extremely instructive and will strengthen the conviction that the text regarding Chios is corrupt. Leaving aside the three largest Jewish groups in the Empire (Constantinople, Thebes, Thessalonica) which had four or five leaders, thirteen out of the remaining twenty communities, ranging from 50 to 400, had a leadership composed of three notables. For one small community, totalling 30, only one leader is reported. Two communities of 50 had two leaders. So had two communities of 100, and one of 140. All the other communities consisting of 50 or 100 had three leaders. It goes without saying that all the communities counting

43,500. This may be considered the approximate number of souls in those Byzantine Jewish communities and guilds which were visited by Benjamin.

ASCENDENCY OF BYZANTINE JEWRY

We recall, however, that Benjamin's figures do not include Asia Minor with its tens and scores of communities in which the great influx of immigrants from the East was felt even more strongly than in the European part of the Empire (except perhaps for the capital). Nor, indeed, do they cover all Byzantine Jewish communities on European soil, or even the total Jewish population of the cities specifically mentioned by Benjamin himself. Even Andréadès and Starr—who maintained that Benjamin's figures, as they are, constitute already the final totals of Jewish populations visited by the traveler, for (so these scholars believed) they denote souls rather than families²⁷⁸—admitted that these figures must be increased by one-third or almost doubled in order to take account of the places omitted in the travelogue.²⁷⁹ Doubling, accordingly, Benjamin's sum total of 8700—and, considering our stress on Asia Minor and our interpretation of the meaning of the numbers reported for Constantinople etc., this is a rather conservative conception of increase—and multiplying then the resulting 17,000 or so by five, we shall have received the grand total of some 85,000 (in round numbers). This figure denotes thus the final estimation of all Jewish inhabitants of the twelfth-century Empire

200 and 300 had an administration of three officials. So had the three great communities of Harnylo, Rhodosto, and Rhodes, which, like Chios, were reported to consist of 400 members. Chios is the *only* community in the population bracket exceeding 140 in which Benjamin found two, instead of three, active community leaders. There can be no doubt, then, that Chios was a small community, somewhere perhaps in the bracket of 50 or less, led, like her equals, by two officials only. The figure 400, as extant in our manuscripts, is a scribal error.

See further on the problem my "In the Footsteps of Benjamin of Tudela" (Hebrew), presented in honor of Y. (F.) Baer.

²⁷⁸ See the previous note.

²⁷⁹ Andréadès suggested a total of 15,000, which means almost doubling the 8603 which he counted in the *Itinerary*. Starr, who counted 8691 (this count will prove correct only on substituting the figure 20 for the misprint 50 with regard to Christopoli), set the total at 12,000. He added, however, that Andréadès' estimate may be usefully borne in mind "as a maximum." Both increments are no less arbitrary than the figures suggested further in this chapter.

No sources have as yet been found that would permit some estimates in amplification of Benjamin's reports on the "few inhabitants, both Greeks and Jews" in Gardiki; on the Island of Lesbos which "has Jewish communities in ten places;" on other of "those islands [which] have many Jewish communities;" or on Cyprus, "where there are Rabbanite and Karaite Jews."

of the Comneni.²⁸⁰ *This was more than the great contemporaneous Jewries of Egypt and Syria combined!*²⁸¹

True, within the huge Byzantine melting pot of 15 million people,²⁸² the 85,000 Jews were but a negligible minority of little more than half percent, while the 40,000 Jews of Egypt constituted a full one percent of that country's 4 million inhabitants,²⁸³ and the same number of Jews in Syria formed one-and-a-half percent of the total Syrian population which did not exceed 3 million.²⁸⁴ It should be remembered, however, that the general populations of Syria and Egypt combined (7 million) were also barely half the general number of the imperial subjects.

The figures obtained from the above computation are brought into even sharper relief when seen and appraised in historical perspective. Close to the middle of the tenth century, following the persecutions of Basil I and the forced conversion instituted under Romanus I Lecapenus, and subsequent to the ensuing flight of many Jews from the country,²⁸⁵ the Jewish population in the Empire was brought down to its lowest point.²⁸⁶ Against that background, the above-described tremendous growth of Byzantine Jewry marks a marvelous recovery within the comparatively brief span of two centuries. Indeed, I should venture to suggest that it was rather a one-century process only! The acme of that growth should with much better reason be placed in the eleventh century than in the late twelfth-century period described by Benjamin. The former was the time of the Empire's territorial and economic expansion which, as we explained, was the incentive for great immigration and for the renaissance of Byzantine Jewry and the rise of Karaism in Byzantium.

²⁸⁰ Baron (*Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 323, end of note 29) is prepared to assume a total of as many as 100,000 Jews" in the Empire of the Comneni "and very likely also in earlier periods."

²⁸¹ The implication of that finding has not yet penetrated into our evaluation of the import of Byzantine Jewry facing Syro-Egyptian Jewry in the time of the Crusades. Much as in general historical presentations, the Byzantine branch of Jewry still occupies a secondary position in the picture of the time. It is to be hoped that detailed monographs on different aspects of Byzantine Jewish life will gradually bring about a revision of that obviously erroneous attitude.

²⁸² This was Andréadès' initial estimate of Byzantine population as a whole. However, in his latest presentation, in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, he came to the conclusion that it is "impossible to estimate even approximately the number of the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire." See there, 54 f., and the editors' note 1 on p. 55.

²⁸³ For the computation on Egypt see Strauss [Ashtor], *Tōledoth hay-Yehūdīm be-Miṣrayim we-Sūryah*, I, 33 f.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁸⁵ See above, 68, note 32, 85, note 74, and further in this chapter, 164 f.

²⁸⁶ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 34.

In the latter period, however, a large portion of Asia Minor had already been ceded to the Seljūks and the general trend of Byzantine population was embarking on a downgrade course.

KARAITE POPULATION DATA

The figures for the capital and for the Karaites therein are even more instructive. We recall that Benjamin found in Péra 2500 Jewish guildmembers, one-fifth of them Karaites.²⁸⁷ Multiplied by five to include their families, Benjamin's figures yield a total of 10,000 Rabbanites and 2500 Karaites across the Golden Horn alone. Even granted that Benjamin's hosts constituted the largest and best-organized group in the city, we shall remain within the limits of caution in estimating the combined strength of other Rabbanite and Karaite groups in Constantinople as equal to one-third of the Péra group. Hence, there probably were altogether some 15,000 Rabbanites and some 3750 Karaites in the city; the Jewish sector as a whole amounted to more than three-and-a-half percent of the city's half-a-million population.²⁸⁸

This stands out most drastically against the 10,000 Rabbanites and merely 300 (or, at best, 600) Karaites reported by Benjamin for contemporaneous Damascus,²⁸⁹ the venerable seat of a respected Karaite community and of a Davidic Karaite Patriarchate.²⁹⁰ On the other hand, the Jews of Fusṭāṭ-Cairo—the capital of Fāṭimid Egypt and the greatest Islamic city of the period—outnumbered their brethren in Constantinople by a sizeable margin. Yet, while counting some six thousand more souls than the Bosphorus community, the 21,000 Fusṭāṭ Rabbanites

²⁸⁷ See the Hebrew text above, 144, note 221, and the quotation in English, 146.

²⁸⁸ For the estimated total of Constantinople's population see e.g., Andréadès, in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 53; Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine*, 83; P. Charanis, "A Note on the Population and Cities of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century," *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume*, 137.

It may be recalled here, for the sake of comparison, that more or less at the same time (1180), Eustathius, the already-quoted patriarch of Thessalonica, estimated the total of Latins in the capital as 60,000. Cf. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, 70.

²⁸⁹ Strauss [Ashtor], *Tōledoth hay-Yehūdīm be-Miṣrayim we-Sūryah*, I, 33. Benjamin reported actually a figure of 3000 from Damascus. However, according to the above-set rules of computation, this figure, denoting taxpayers, must be multiplied by three. The total agrees with the round figure of 10,000 souls reported by Petaḥyah of Regensburg in his *Sibbūb*.

The number given by Benjamin for the Damascene Karaites reads 100 (in Adler's edition) or 200 (in the edition of Asher). Multiplied again by three it yields 300 or 600, respectively.

²⁹⁰ See above, 99, note 52.

constituted probably only one percent of the city's total population.²⁹¹ On the other hand, the strength of the Karaites in the Fātimid capital lay, first and above all, in their economic and political prominence rather than in sheer numbers.²⁹² While no contemporaneous figures are available, there is, in fact all justification to assume that the sectarian community on the Nile was numerically much smaller than its sister-community on the Bosphorus.²⁹³ In a matter of two centuries (or less), then, the Karaite community of Constantinople, and Byzantine Karaism in general, came to occupy a place of leadership in the Karaite world.

The general impression reached from the above findings should make it easier now, at the close of our statistical analysis, to suggest the possible size of the whole Byzantine Karaite population at the end of Karaism's formative period in the Empire.²⁹⁴ The figure we computed for the capital must perforce serve us as a point of departure and a comparative unit of measure. Thus it is plausible to suppose that, since Asia Minor performed, by virtue of its geographic position, the task

²⁹¹ The figure given for the Jewry of Fustāt-Cairo by Benjamin reads in the more plausible Adler version 7000 (to be multiplied by three). The Asher edition has 2000, which, multiplied by three, would total 6000 Jews only, i.e., one-third of Constantinople's Jewry.

Professor Baron (*Social and Religious History of the Jews*, III, 105) calls attention to the fact that in the eleventh century "Fustāt-Cairo outranked even Baghdād as the largest city in the world of Islām." The latter city was said to be embracing in the tenth century a population totalling 2 million. Cf. Baron, *op. cit.*, 100, and 276 f., note 32.

²⁹² Cf., for instance, the quotation above, 45, note 52. Even in the late fifteenth century 'Obadyah of Bertinoro noted that "השמרונים הם יותר עשירים מכל יתר היהודים שב- מצרים... והקראים הם יותר עשירים מהרבנים ויש בין הרבנים גם כן עשירים. אכן טבע היהודים בארץ ישמעאל להראות עצמם עניים... ואינם בעלי צדקה ולא גומלי חסדים כלל... ובוז יפה כח הקראים מכת הרבנים שהם גומלים חסד זה לזה. Cf. 'Obadyah's letter as reprinted in Yaari's *Iggeroth Ereš Yisrael*, 131; or in Kahana's *Sifrūth ha-Histōryah ha-Yisr'elith*, II, 41. See further Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 258, 272, 408 (note 58) and 412 (note 73).

²⁹³ As already stressed above, 154, note 269, only the late fifteenth-century travelers give us exact totals of the Karaites in Cairo. Cf., for instance, 'Obadyah's letter, in Yaari, *Iggeroth*, 129; Kahana, *Sifrūth ha-Histōryah ha-Yisr'elith*, II, 39. See also Strauss [Ashtor], *Tōledoth hay-Yehūdīm be-Miṣrayīm we-Sūrya*, II, 428; and Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 272.

²⁹⁴ Except for repeating Benjamin's data for Péra, no effort has been made as yet to arrive at some estimate, however inconclusive, of Karaite population strength in Byzantium. It shall be perhaps argued by some that the herewith-attempted analysis and computation are of little avail. It will possibly be pointed out that, with all the toil invested, the results still remain within the realm of guesswork. It seems to me, however, that these studies in the geographic and demographic expansion of Karaism are worth while, whatever their immediate results; indeed, they are imperative, if Karaite research is ever to cease being a catalogue of petty feuds and legalistic bickerings and is to approach, instead, its subject-matter as a dynamic, human and social phenomenon.

of both "clearing depot" and "absorption center" (if modern terms be permitted) for the major portion of Karaite immigration from the East, all the Anatolian Karaite groups taken together could not have been less than the number of Karaites living in the imperial capital alone. The figure 3750, reached before with regard to Constantinopolitan Karaism, must then be at least doubled to include also the Anatolian communities. Hence, the minimum number of Karaites in Asia Minor and on the Bosphorus in the time under discussion was about 7500. To this number the European Byzantine groups must be added. Admittedly, the sect was poorly represented in the Balkans during its formative years. Nevertheless, a total of 200 families, i.e., 1000 souls, for all the European cities of the Empire (including Thessalonica and Adrianople) must be considered the barest minimum. In brief: The total of Karaite residents in the Byzantine Empire at the close of the period forming the theme of the present volume was no less than 8500, or ten percent of all Byzantine Jewry.

It may convincingly be argued that, in the light of the decisive role allotted in the foregoing pages to the Anatolian scene, the suggested numerical estimate of the sectarian strength in Asia Minor is unduly conservative. One may further object, in the same vein, that the expansion of Anatolia's Karaism must have enormously outweighed in the eleventh century the limited success of the sect on European soil. Considering the low ratio of Karaism in the European communities against the very high percentage of sectarian groups assumed for Asia Minor, the opinion may be voiced that the Karaite ratio in the capital occupied a middle position between these extremes. Accordingly, so it may be maintained, instead of suggesting an average of ten percent, as we did above, the twenty-percent ratio, authoritatively reported for Péra, should rather be adopted as indicative of the average picture of Byzantine Karaite strength versus that of Byzantine Rabbinism.

Nevertheless, it seems that so long as no corroborating evidence is forthcoming from Asia Minor—that province is still a *terra incognita* for medieval Jewish historiography—the conservative total estimate has provisionally more to commend itself. The probable average ratio of Karaites versus Rabbanites in the general Jewish society in Byzantium must, therefore, be lowered correspondingly.

REORIENTATION OF LOYALTIES

The great victories in the East during the 60's and 70's of the tenth century and the later conquests of Basil II in the Balkan Peninsula made Byzan-

tium the uncontested power in the East Mediterranean basin. Peace and economic prosperity descended on the area,²⁹⁵ and, with it, relative peace and prosperity for the Jews. However biased and exaggerated may be the appraisal of Jewry's position in eleventh-century Byzantium by Elisha bar Shinaya of Nisibis, it surely contains a great amount of truth. The Greeks, he reports,

afford them [i.e., the Jews] protection, allow them openly to adhere to their religion, and to build their synagogues. . . . The Jew in their lands may say, "I am a Jew." He may adhere to his religion and recite his prayers. No one throws it up to him, restrains him, or puts any difficulties in his way.²⁹⁶

In this situation, the spasmodic persecutions of Judaism in Byzantium back in the days of Leo III the Isaurian, Basil I the Macedonian and Romanus I Lecapenus must have appeared to the later generations as minor episodes better to be forgotten.²⁹⁷ A bold reorientation of loyalties was inevitable.

This change in attitude can clearly be gauged from a confrontation of three great spokesmen of Karaism, Daniel al-Ḳūmīsī, Salman ben Yerūḥam and Yefeth ben 'Alī.²⁹⁸ The three observe the international scene from a common vantage-point: Muslim-ruled Palestine; but, active at half-century intervals from each other, they react differently.

Daniel al-Ḳūmīsī belongs to the late ninth-century generation of admiring Karaites who are happy to be "living in the midst of the

²⁹⁵ Cf. Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 39, 95 f.; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 255.

²⁹⁶ Cf. the Arabic text in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 246; Eng. version and notes, 190, No. 131. Starr, true to his low estimate of the numerical strength of Byzantine Jewry (see notes 277 and 279, above), minimizes the actual implications of Elisha's statement. See also Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 67.

²⁹⁷ On the two-and-a-half centuries' stretch of undisturbed toleration after the discontinuance of the Lecapenus policy against the Jews, see Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 8, 9 f.

²⁹⁸ On Daniel al-Ḳūmīsī see the literature listed above, 55, note 74. On Salman ben Yerūḥam see Poznański, "The Beginnings of Karaite Settlement in Jerusalem" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem* (ed. Luncz), X (1913), 94 ff.; *idem*, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 12 ff.; Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*, 76 ff.; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 18 ff., 1469 f.; S. Skoss, *Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz of David ben Abraham al-Fāsi*, I, Introd., xxxix ff.; I. Davidson's Introduction to his edition of Salman's *Book of the Wars of the Lord*; Nemoj's brief Introduction to an English selection from Salman's works, *Karaite Anthology*, 69 ff.

I am discussing at great length the problem of Salman's attitude to Christianity, in my paper on "Some Aspects of Karaite Attitude to Christians and Christianity," to be published shortly in Hebrew (parts of that paper were read to the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1957).

On Yefeth ben 'Alī see the references above, 94, note 21.

kingdom of Ishmael which loves those who fix the new moon by direct observation."²⁹⁹ Eagerly he reads into the Book of Daniel the notion of his own time that "the king of Ishmael is greater than all kings."³⁰⁰ Why, the Muslim ruler has magnified himself

over the kingdom of the Persians, the kingdom of the Romans, and the kingdom of the Turks, since the Ishmaelites conquered also many Turkish provinces.... Who can enumerate all the provinces under their rule? (al-Ḳūmisī on Dan. 11: 36).³⁰¹

Under the banner of the kings of Islām march peoples of the remotest regions, men of all nationalities and all creeds:

men from Khorāsān, Brahmīns and others; men from the tribes of Ya'kūb, 'Umar, Khuḳāran, and the latter's subtribes, who live in the mountains of Khorāsān and Ṭabaristān; also men of Daylam, likewise idolaters—all these are parts of the army of the kings of Ishmael (al-Ḳūmisī on Dan. 11: 39).³⁰²

Not so Salman. Living already at a time of progressive disintegration of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, he no longer had illusions as to the real nature of Islamic rule, notwithstanding Karaism's traditional loyalty to that rule. The kingdom of Ishmael—that "son of a slave-girl," that "man of deceit"³⁰³—is the last of the "four kingdoms" predicted by the Daniel apocalypse, and "the most difficult of them all."³⁰⁴ And yet, God forbid that Christendom should defeat Islām in Palestine and be again in the position to decide the fate of Jewry as it was in Late Roman times. The upsurge of anti-Jewish feelings among the Christian neighbors in Jerusalem, in the wake of the persecution of the Jews in the Empire by the Lecapenus administration, was still fresh in the minds of a Salman and of his contemporaries. It is this unforgettable experience that lin-

²⁹⁹ Cf. al-Ḳūmisī's "Tract," published by Mann, *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921-22), 286; *Karaite Anthology*, 38.

³⁰⁰ Mann, "Early Karaite Bible Commentaries," *JQR* (N. S.), XII (1921-22), 519; *Karaite Anthology*, 39.

³⁰¹ Mann, *op. cit.*, 519 f.; *Karaite Anthology*, 39.

³⁰² Mann, *op. cit.*, 521; *Karaite Anthology*, 41.

³⁰³ Cf. *The Arabic Commentary of Salman ben Yerūham on the Book of Psalms* (Chapters 42-72), published recently by L. Marwick, 5 f., 81.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81, 94 ff., 98. Cf. my comment in a review of Marwick's edition, *Hammiz-rah Hehadash*, VIII (1957), 248. See also the bitter lament, possibly emanating from Salman, in the "Prayer by Salman ben Yerūham (?) the Karaite" (Hebrew), published by S. Assaf in *Zion* (O.S.), III (1929), 88 ff. Likewise, see Salman's comment on Ecclesiastes 9:9, as communicated by Pinsker, *Likkūtē*, 158.

Cf. further J. Praver, "The Vicissitudes of the Jewish and Karaite Quarters in Jerusalem during the Arabic Period" (Hebrew), *Zion*, XII (1947), esp. 138 ff. Praver boldly reinterpreted in an anti-Muslim vein a statement by Salman which was hitherto understood as directed against the Christians. Praver's interpretation necessitates, however, a further elucidation of some linguistic aspects and of the factual background of the text (see end of note 298, above).

gers in the background of the sharply anti-Christian utterances scattered all over Salman's biblical commentaries.³⁰⁵

As against Daniel al-Kūmisi, whose political loyalty was undividedly dedicated to the regime of Islām, and as against Salman ben Yerūham, who was already disillusioned with the Caliphate, yet remained equally suspicious of Christian Byzantium, Yefeth ben 'Ali takes a decisive step towards a western orientation. Yefeth, whose works later achieved great popularity in the Empire, is expressing the opinions of a later generation. That generation was already past the initial successes of Curcuas, the field-commander of the Lecapenus forces. It witnessed such stupendous successes as the liberation of Cilicia and the conquest of parts of Syria and Northern Mesopotamia by the great soldier-emperors. Yefeth finds it difficult to conceal his admiration for the Byzantine rulers of his time, the heirs of the ancient Roman military tradition. He is genuinely impressed with the resurgent Byzantine might which contrasts so drastically with the lawlessness and enfeeblement of the decaying Caliphate.

Times had changed. The future of the East Mediterranean world seemed now irretrievably intertwined with the progress of Byzantine revival. Employing methods common to all medieval commentators, Yefeth, we remember, rendered the ancient Daniel prophecy in terms which directly reflected contemporary events and circumstances. The most outstanding features of the new era, as Yefeth ben 'Ali saw it, were the renaissance of Rome-Byzantium and the decline of Islām.

["Part of potter's clay and part of iron"]—the *iron* represents the Romans and the *clay* the Arabs; and this is because the Romans reigned a hundred years (?) before the Arabs. Then the Arabs began to reign. But the kingdom of the Romans remained, as is witnessed in our own day. Now, Scripture compares the kingdom of the Arabs to clay, because they have neither power nor force like the Romans (Yefeth on Dan. 2:40).³⁰⁶

A HELPING HAND

This admiration for Byzantium's military and political position in the world, and the sense of confidence in the "Pax Byzantina" which filled

³⁰⁵ The Lecapenus persecution had dangerous repercussions in Jerusalem, where Salman ben Yerūham and his colleagues of the *Abelē Šiyyon* Order resided. Cf. the text in J. Aronius, *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden im fränkischen und deutschen Reiche*, 53 f., §§123-24; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, I, Pt. 1, 76, §624; B. Z. Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael bag-Golah*, I, Bk. 1, 33; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 151, No. 90.

³⁰⁶ See *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Jefeth ibn 'Ali the Karaite*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 29, lines 8 ff.; Eng. tr., 13.; and the quotations above, 94 f.

the Jew at the turn of the millennium, manifested itself in a practical way as well. In the early years of the eleventh century the Byzantine communities, Rabbanite and Karaite alike, received an influx of refugees from Fāṭimid Egypt. The latter were fleeing from the sudden persecutions of the reputedly mad caliph, al-Ḥākim.³⁰⁷

Whether the newcomers integrated with the local communities or whether they ultimately returned to Egypt after the religious restrictions were removed, is still open to question. The principle, however, remains: there was a general confidence in Byzantine stability, and that confidence extended far beyond the Empire proper.^{307a}

The position of early Byzantine Karaism within the context of general Jewish history should now be fairly clear. The momentous upheavals of the tenth century caused the economic and political map of the Near East to assume new dimensions. In the general movement of populations and the ensuing shift of political allegiances, the Jews were swept along by the tide. The Karaites, as an integral part of the Jewish people, shared the same destiny.

³⁰⁷ On the anti-Christian and anti-Jewish discrimination by the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim see Yahya, 260 f., 279 ff., 303 f.; Bar-Hebraeus, 184 f. Cf. also, in general, S. Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 126 f.; S. de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, I, ccclxviii; J. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 32 ff. Yahya states, 311, that in 1013 al-Ḥākim permitted many Christians and Jews to leave the country for Byzantine territories and to take along with them their families and property.

It seems that Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 185, puts unnecessary stress on Yahya's subsequent report in which only the emigration of Christians is mentioned. Incidentally, Bar-Hebraeus also, 184 f., mentions the Jews neither in connection with the reported emigration nor with reference to the return of the émigrés after the discriminatory legislation was rescinded. The only source which clearly includes the Jews among the emigrants to Byzantium is that utilized by H. F. Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fāṭimiden-Chalifen nach arabischen Quellen*, in *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, XXVII (1881), 114 f.; Starr, *op. cit.*, 184, No. 126 (the reference given there is to be corrected!)

The fate of the Karaites under al-Ḥākim's reign was not different from that of their Rabbanite neighbors. Thus, a Karaite synagogue in Fustāṭ is known to have been demolished by the decree of the caliph. See R. Gottheil, "An Eleventh-century Document Concerning a Cairo Synagogue," *JQR* (O.S.), XIX (1906-7), 467 ff., esp. 511 f.

^{307a} That confidence apparently did not diminish even more than a century later, notwithstanding the revolutionary changes which occurred meantime on the international scene. The emigration movement of Egyptian Jews to Byzantium still found enthusiastic followers in the twelfth century. Cf. the text published most recently by Goitein and cited above, 117, note 107a.

It may also be of interest to note that the emperor's Jewish physician in the 1160's was known as R. Solomon "the Egyptian." Cf. the testimony of Benjamin of Tudela, as quoted above, 145, note 221.

Yet, while the Karaites' part in the process was undoubtedly small when measured in absolute figures, the lasting effect of that process on the future of Karaism exceeded by far the numerical share of the Karaites in it. For to the Rabbanites such migrations brought merely an *increase* in population and a rehabilitation of the *existing* communities which had been depleted earlier by the anti-Jewish policy of Romanus Lecapenus. To the Karaites these migrations meant the *founding* of *new* communities in a *new* homeland and the unfolding of a fresh and significant chapter in their history.

THE EARLY STEPS

HAVING FOLLOWED early Byzantine Karaite beginnings as part of the general trend of Jewish experience, we may now turn our attention to the more unique aspects of sectarian Jewish development on Byzantine soil. Unlike their Rabbanite compatriots, the Karaites were at the very outset confronted with serious problems of adjustment.

The Rabbanites had a long history of unbroken settlement in the Empire. Their roots were firm, their modes of life well-defined. They could easily absorb the new Rabbanite settlers, who were now arriving in Byzantine territory from the newly conquered eastern provinces, and integrate them within the framework of existing institutions. On the other hand, the Karaite immigrants found no hosts of their own creed to welcome them and had no precedents which they could follow; there was no organized Karaism in Byzantium prior to their arrival.

Thus, the three or four generations, from the 70's of the tenth century until some time before the middle of the eleventh century, mark the *early formative years* of Byzantine Karaism. This was a period of territorial penetration and settlement, of growth and persistent strengthening of roots in the new land, of integration in the country's economy.

SETTLEMENT OF MERCHANTS

The circumstances under which Karaite settlements began appearing on Byzantine soil decided perforce the initial economic outlook of Karaism in the Empire. In spite of our earlier stress on Rabbanite-Karaite similarity of economic endeavor,¹ it is fair to assume that the *first* handfuls of immigrants who drifted inland from the once-Islamic provinces of the East were predominantly, if not exclusively, composed of *merchants*. We recall that the earliest document in which one of the settlements (Attaleia) is mentioned, was quite explicit on this point.²

¹ See above, 44 ff.

² Cf. 46 ff., above.

Not only was the very writing of the document prompted by a piratical attack on a merchant-vessel carrying Karaites and Rabbanites across the Mediterranean; but the Jewish passengers who fell into captivity are clearly designated as *soḥarim*, i.e., traders.³

International trade must have been a lucrative business indeed, if, as we gather from several corroborating Genizah epistles,⁴ Jewish merchants braved the hazards of sea voyage and defied the dangers of Muslim piracy to cover the distance between the Byzantine shore and Egyptian ports. It is to be presupposed, too, that participation in such trade required the possession of considerable capital, both for investment in merchandise and for coverage of risks incurred by the voyage. This frequently necessitated the pooling of resources by several merchants. The profit would, of course, be divided correspondingly.⁵ In addition, governmental monopoly⁶ and "trust"-like practices of big landowners and businessmen often piled up insurmountable difficulties in the path of the lesser merchants.⁷

In brief: The assumption is inevitable that the early Karaites who settled in Byzantium were merchants of considerable means. This important point should not be lost sight of when speculating on the subsequent ramification of Karaite economy in the Empire.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

The wealth and the broad commercial enterprise of the first Karaite merchant groups which settled alongside the old Rabbanite communities

³ Above, 47, note 56: שבעה יהודים סוחרים מבני ארץ אנטליה.

⁴ Cf. the texts assembled and translated by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 186 f. and 190 ff., Nos. 128, 129, 132, 133.

⁵ Cf. the comment on Job 40:30 in the printed section of the Byzantine Karaite *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Job, 11b: סחורה נכבדה להם סחורה בשתבוא להם הסוחרים מנהג הסוחרים ביניהם יברו עליו חברים, מנהג הסוחרים בשתבוא להם סחורה נכבדה רבת. ריח יתחברו תברים ויחלקו ביניהם "aliens," i.e., those living outside the capital or originating from the East, see Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance*, 61 ff.

⁶ While the characterization of Byzantium by Nicole, the editor of the *Book of Prefect*, as "paradis du monopole et du privilège," may be exaggerated, governmental monopoly and controls were no doubt an outstanding feature of the Empire's economic policy. Cf. Macri, *op. cit.*, 18 ff., 36, 49 f., 55 ff., etc.; Bratianu, *Etudes byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale*, 136 ff.; S. Katz, "Some Aspects of Economic Life in the Byzantine Empire," *Pacific Historical Review*, VII (1938), 33 f.; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 17 ff., 203 f.

⁷ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Ezekiel, 9c. Commenting on Ez. 34:17, 21, the Byzantine compiler selects the following: האילים העתודים, הם בעלי השלטונות והסוחרים או בעלי השדות. בצד ובתוף תהדושו, העשירים מן עמי החצרות והם יתפשו לסחורות ולא יניחו לזולתם לקנות לחיות... בצד ובתוף תהדושו, העשירים מן עמי החצרות והם יתפשו לסחורות ולא יניחו לזולתם לקנות לחיות. הארץ יעשו כמו זה עם העניים ולא יחברו לענייהם בסחורותיהם.

must have been conducive to the speedy inauguration in the new locale of such variegated socio-economic services and activities as naturally develop in an organized and well-to-do settlement. Thus the clusters of traders were soon followed by other immigrants—relatives, close and distant, or just “Landsleute”—from different walks of life. There arrived artisans, laborers, peddlers, religious officials and teachers. In the course of a generation or two, the economic picture of the Karaite groups in Byzantium automatically assumed close resemblance to that of their native Rabbanite neighbors, whose number also swelled considerably through a corresponding influx of Rabbanite immigrants.

Unfortunately, we possess only the record of military events of that period. So little is known of the internal conditions in the Empire during those years that historians regard the reigns of Basil II and his brother Constantine VIII as the most obscure chapter in the inner history of the Byzantine Empire.⁸ As it happens, precisely the span of time which these two reigns embraced (976–1028) is crucial for early Karaite history in Byzantium. It corresponds exactly to the period which extended from the probable establishment of the *first Karaite settlement in the Empire*, following the great conquests of Nicephor and Tzimiskes, until the appearance of the *first documentary record of Karaites* in Attaleia.

In view of the general obscurity of the period, the lack of data on a group largely inarticulate and numerically insignificant comes as no surprise. Moreover, the Karaites were outwardly indistinguishable from the Rabbanites (themselves never numerous in Byzantium⁹ nor particularly creative there in the cultural field).¹⁰

And yet, a few references to the economic pursuits of Byzantine Karaites could perhaps be culled from the Karaite literature at our disposal. These references will be offered here reluctantly and with the strongest of qualifications. Contained in biblical commentaries or in a legalistic dissertation, such material must be used with utmost caution,

⁸ See J. B. Bury, “Roman Emperors from Basil II to Isaac Komnenos,” *Selected Essays*, 127 (reprinted from *English Historical Review*, IV [1889]); Schlumberger, *L'Épopée byzantine*, I, Introd., iii and notes (quoting Finlay), and esp. 328 f. (quoting Gibbon).

⁹ See above, 160.

¹⁰ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 78 f., where the problem of the apparent mediocrity of Jewish cultural achievements in Byzantium is posed and left unanswered. My own evaluation of Jewish creativity in the Empire will be expounded elsewhere, in connection with my general presentation of Byzantine Jewish history (from the Arab conquests to the Crusades) which is due to appear in the near future.

lest its frequently theoretical character is mistaken for an indication of concrete cases from life itself. Moreover, in view of the eclectic nature of Byzantine Karaite compositions in general, an economic detail, copied in Byzantium from an earlier (unpublished) book which was created in a different (Islamic) environment, may erroneously be interpreted as reflecting the new (Byzantine) scene. Still, considering the general paucity of sources, we cannot afford to reject unconditionally even such admittedly dubious evidence.¹¹

ON SEA AND SEASHORE

International trade and its inevitable corollary, travel, are indirectly attested to in Byzantine Karaite literature through the religious problems that they posed to the Karaite merchant. The frequent sea voyages on the Byzantium-Egypt route, and, to some extent, also the almost daily necessity to cross the Strait in order to reach the center of Constantinople and the city's markets from, say, the seat of the Jewish guild at Péra,¹² made the constant reminder of the prohibition of travel on the Lord's day more imperative than ever.

Thus, Karaite legislators deemed it necessary to reiterate and explain to their flock that travel on a Sabbath comes under the general interdiction of work on that day, since it forms part of the regular duties of a merchant.

Sea voyage and land travel on horseback resemble each other in respect to the action involved. The first is part of the activity of merchants and seamen; the other, too, is the work of merchants and travelers on the road. As for the first, this is precisely what the Scriptures meant by saying, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters" (Psalms 107:23). On the other hand, riding on horseback

¹¹ For an example of an erroneous inference from a passage in *Sefer ha-'Osher*, which later proved to be a mere translation from the Arabic text of Yefeth ben 'Ali, see above, 30 f., note 9. Yet, the eclectic nature of these sources is to a certain extent advantageous in our case. Though compiled at the end of the eleventh or as late as the middle of the twelfth century, the material at hand very frequently reflects much earlier situations.

Of the Karaite sources about to be cited, one is Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher*, of which the Jeremiah-Chronicles section (with the exception of Psalms) was published by the Karaite press at Gozlow in 1836. The hitherto unpublished part, covering the whole Pentateuch and the Joshua-Isaiah section, is contained in the Leiden MS Warner No. 8, and will be cited from a photostatic copy of the manuscript. Since the book is now being prepared for print (by L. Marwick, who was good enough to lend me his photostats), only a few of the references will be quoted here *in extenso*. The other source is Yehūdah Hadassi's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, published in Gozlow also in 1836. (Cf. on these publications above, 28, note 5, and 30, note 8 [under §3].)

¹² See our quotation from Benjamin's *Itinerary*, above, 144, note 221, and 146.

is the job of warriors and merchants, wherefore it comes under the scriptural interdiction, "Thou shalt not do any manner of work" on your Holy Day (Ex. 20: 10).¹³

When, however, by force of circumstances, the merchant had to stay on a sea- or river-going vessel during the Sabbath, he was under obligation to refrain from moving objects on the ship from one place to another. Nor was he allowed to draw water from the sea or river for personal use.¹⁴ A prolonged sea voyage could, further, make the Jewish merchant forget the exact date of the Sabbath or of a holiday. Opinions were divided on what was the best procedure to follow in such a case.¹⁵

Ritual slaughter (*sheḥiṭah*) on a ship was another problem, since there was no dirt available to cover up the blood of the animal, as required by Law. Necessity forced the Karaites to follow here the practice of the more experienced Rabbanites and, in general, to yield to the realities of life under the novel conditions.¹⁶

This intimate relationship with the sea, which developed both through commercial voyages and as result of settlement on the seashore, left an imprint on the Karaite settler. He became quite an expert on fish, learned to remember their habits and knew their names in Greek.¹⁷ When reading in the Bible on the ship-building enterprise of Noah, he under-

¹³ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 56b, Alphabet 149: אם ידבב אדם על ספינה בים או בנהר . . . ובאגם לדעת שלא יבוא עליו יום שבת מותר לו: ואם מקום הליכת דצונו רחוק יקרב כיבשה וישבות . . . בפתח פתאם אם יאגס ותהיה כים דכיבתו כי לא יוכל לשבות חוצה אגוס הוא ושוגג וה' הסולח אשמת שגגתו. אבל אם בששי לדעתו עשות בו ימי שבתותיך וימות קדשך גמת חובתו אסור לו. כי רכיבת הים כרכיבת הסוס ביבשה דומה לו מעללו: זו מלאכת טוחרים וירודי הים וזו מלאכת סחורי ועורבי והולכי דרכיך: דברו שאמר עושי מלאכת ב"ר [=במים רבים]. ורכיבת הסוסים ממלאכת אנשי המלחמה והסחרי'. והוא תחת מאמר לא עושי מלאכת ב"ר (The 2nd Pers. Sing. Masc. endings at the conclusion of each of the above-quoted phrases, as well as in all other alphabetical acrostics forming the chapters of *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, have no bearing whatsoever on the content of the text. They are a regular mannerism of Hadassī who, in exaggeration of the then prevalent conception of correct prose-writing, arbitrarily made all the phrases of his lengthy encyclopedia rhyme in קָפָה, i.e., 2nd Pers. Sing. Masc. It may well be remembered that the great and truly poetic "Zionism" of Yehūdāh Hallevī employs the 2nd Pers. Plur. Fem. ending as the uniform rhyme of all its stanzas.)

¹⁴ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 56a, Alphabet 147: עוברי ימים ונהרות שהוקרו בימי קדש בלי רצונם אוסור להם לשלוח יד ולטלטל כליהם ממקום למקום או לשלוח יד לקחת מים מן תוך הים ממקומות מעינים או לחרוז פניך וגופך או לשחוחם בשתייתך.

¹⁵ Cf. the hitherto unpublished section of *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Deuteronomy 4:2, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 81a: א"א [=אם אמר] אם היה האישי בספינה ושבת ליום השבת ולא ידע אם היום ואם מחר. גא' [=באמר] חוב לבטל ביום שדעתו מסתפקת. והקרוב ישמור יום א' שהוא לבו בוטא אל אותו היום. ויש א' [=אומרים] ישמור ב' או ג' ימים וישמור כי קיים למצוה.

¹⁶ See the unpublished Leviticus section of *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 17:13, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 47b f.: והורו מקצת חכמי הרבני' כי מי שישחט בספינה ואין שם עפר ישחט . . . ואם שחט ולא כסוה תאסר אכילתו.

¹⁷ Cf., for instance, the discussion on Lev. 11:9 in *Sefer ha-'Osher*, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 39b.

stood the technical details given by the Scriptures in terms of his own observation of actual work in ship-building or ship-repair.¹⁸ Also, possibly on the basis of local experience, he found it quite natural to ascribe the wealth of the biblical tribe of Zebulun to treasures from shipwrecks off the Zebulun coast.¹⁹ Finally, he also developed a taste for a good sailor story and eagerly listened to accounts of fabulous lands and wonders beyond the seas, said to have been told by adventurous seamen returning to Constantinople.²⁰

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The diversification of the socio-economic structure of Byzantine Karaism came as the natural result of influx of immigrants of different professions who followed the first Karaite merchant groups into Byzantine coastal cities. Some native Jews from various walks of life also joined the sect, enlarging thereby the social and economic range of Byzantine Karaism and opening new possibilities of work and trade to the newcomers. Gradually, many of the new immigrants entered industries in which the local (Rabbanite) Jews were long established, such as textile²¹ and leather.²²

The Karaites' share in the textile industry is attested to by Karaite literature when discussing legal-religious problems involved therein. Explicitly mentioned are weaving²³ and dyeing of linen, of wool and silk.²⁴ Of course, the halakhic questions proper with which Byzantine

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4a, on Gen. 6:14. Cf. also *ibid.*, 152b, on Isaiah 33:21. In the latter instance the distinction is made between a "mighty fleet" and אַנִּי שִׁיט, which is being explained here as a smaller cruising force and translated (in Hebrew transliteration) as גְּלִימָה, γαλιμα. Indeed, this term—"swordfish" in Byzantine Greek—appears for the first time in the *Tactics* of Leo VI in the meaning of an auxiliary warcraft. It then passed to Western Europe in the form of the "galley." Cf. Lopez, in *Relazioni* (of the Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences, 1955), III, 162.

¹⁹ *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Deut. 33:19, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 103a.

²⁰ Cf. the lengthy story on the fabulous land of dwarfs, in *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 29d f., Alphabet 60, whereupon Hadassi adds: וְאִישׁ אֶחָד גְּבוּרָה וְרוּחַ קוֹמָה וְגִבּוֹר מְבִנֵי קִרְשָׁנִינָא . . . הַגְּלִתִּי סִפְיָתוֹ בְּגִבּוֹל אֶרֶץ . . . הָאִישׁ נִמְלֵט מִשָּׁם וְהָיָה מִסְטֵר לְכָל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּהַל אֶרֶץ. For the sources of some of Hadassi's fables as well as of the story just quoted, see A. Scheiber, "Elements fabuleux dans l'Eshkol Hakofer," *REJ*, CVIII (=N.S., VIII, 1948), 41 ff.

²¹ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 28 f., and the regesta thereto.

²² *Ibid.*, 29. Cf. also Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, 166 ff. (and notes).

²³ *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 11:32, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 40b, in connection with ritual impurity attaching to woven material.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30a, on Ex. 25:4. In this connection it is perhaps worth while to cite a brief reference to embroidery, and to designing patterns on woven stuff. The latter job seems to have been the exclusive domain of Christian craftsmen, possibly because

Karaite authorities were preoccupied in this connection are of importance in our context only insofar as their treatment shows consideration for realities of the Byzantine scene.

Thus, discussing the practical implications of the biblical prohibition of *sha'atnez* (i.e., two kinds of stuff in one garment), Byzantine Karaite legislators declared: "We may make and sell *sha'atnez* but we are not allowed to wear it ourselves."²⁵ To be sure, even this last clause was eventually eased by some lawmakers.²⁶ The rule applied not only to wool and linen, which are explicitly mentioned in the Scriptures, but to silk as well.²⁷

of the frequently churchly theme of the design. Commenting on Ex. 38:23, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 33b f., Jacob explains: ורוקם, מן האריגה יעשה הריקום. אשר יציירוהו הגויים במחט in embroidery and in wearing apparel are given.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 92b, on Deut. 21:11. The same principle is explicitly stated even by the conservative Yehudah Hadassi, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 92a, Alphabet 241: כל לבישת נבר כלאיים אסור: ועשייתם וארינתם וקנייתם ומכירתם להרויח מותר... אסור הוא בלבישתך ולא בלקיחתך. The extent to which this legal support of Jewish textile industry by Byzantine Karaite lawmakers (and probably also by their Palestinian mentors) differs from the original Karaite legislation concerning *sha'atnez* can be gauged from a comparison of our texts with the *Book of Precepts* by 'Anan ben David in eighth-century Babylonia. Cf. Harkavy's edition, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 5 f.: וכתב לא יעלה עליך, ואפילו וכתב נמי אסיר למהוה שעטנו, דאי הארי בכיחא אי אפשר דלא דארי ליה אינש מיהכא להכא. ואמריה בלשון לא יעלה עליך, לאדעך דאנת אסיר לך למיעברי ו מאי דעברין אחריני נמי אסיר לך למהוה בביתך.

²⁶ *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 19:19, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 50b: א"א [=אם] שעטנו... א"א היכשר לעשותו. נא [=נאמר] יכשר. א"א היכשר שישכב על דבר שהוא שעטנו. נא יכשר... ואין חלוף כי הבגד שהוא מן המוך והפשתים יכשר ללבוש אותו. This, however, is not the opinion of Hadassi. Cf. his *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 92a, Alphabet 241.

Of course, one could argue that Hadassi's stand on the matter is consistent with his general tendency toward a more stringent observance of the letter of law. This tendency stemmed from both his personal piety and the revivalist trend of the twelfth century. Yet, it seems, that Hadassi lacks, in the present case the usual exhortative vigor characteristic of other parts of his book. The impression is gained that his pronouncement was neither designed to nor does it actually reflect the *sha'atnez* situation in the Karaite camp in Byzantium. Rather, the stereotype restatement of the old Karaite view on the matter was called upon to support Hadassi's polemic against the Rabbanites in a different problem altogether. As is well known, the Karaites denounced also the Rabbanite use of *šišith* (=ritual fringes) as *sha'atnez* pure and simple. Indeed, the whole of Alphabet 241 of *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, as well as the adjacent chapter, are devoted to a refutation of the Rabbanite legislation governing *šišith*. Thus, Hadassi's strict reiteration of the general principle of *sha'atnez*, as expounded by the old school and neglected in his own time and country, was intended merely to serve as background for his anti-Rabbanite polemics on the subject of *šišith*. It hardly bears witness to the twelfth-century Karaite position on the observance of *sha'atnez* proper in Byzantium.

²⁷ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 19:19, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 50b. The Karaites utilized here the peculiar "etymology" of the term *sha'atnez* as offered by 'Anan in his *Book of Precepts*, ed. Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 5. According

Of course, chances are that this liberalizing trend was initiated even earlier, in Palestine, under the great authorities whom the Byzantine Karaite leaders regarded as their masters. This will be clarified only after the earlier (Palestinian Arabic) texts are published. At any rate, the needs arising from the Byzantine conditions were served well by adopting this liberal legislation.

TANNERS

There is also no doubt about Karaite participation in the tanning of hides, an occupation reported by Benjamin of Tudela as pursued by what seems to have been a regular Jewish guild in Constantinople; it caused ill feeling toward the Jews among the Gentile inhabitants of the place on account of the filth and bad odor it brought to the neighborhood.²⁸ Also in this case the Karaite share in the profession

to 'Anan, the word consists of two roots (talmudic exposition discerns in it three roots). The first part denotes the animal element, the other denotes a plant living on water. Thus the mingling of wool with flax is *sha'at(ah)* plus *noz(lim)*, hence *sha'aṭnez*. Through this etymology silk could be included under the "animal element." What seems to be a description of the silkworm culture is given by Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 24b, Alphabets 42–43.

²⁸ Cf. above, 141 (and notes), 142, 144 f. (note 221), 145; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 29, and 231, No. 182.

In this connection attention should be drawn to an overlooked passage in the *Book of Prefect* (XIV, 2) which deals with the leatherworkers' guilds in the capital. As a rule, every guild had an *exarch* for a director. The number of *exarchoi* (or *prostatai*) did not exactly correspond to the number of organized professions. The nature of certain trades or crafts made it imperative to subdivide them into "precinct" guilds, with separate directors for each section of the city.

On the other hand, however, one case is mentioned in which a single exarch was to represent more than one professional grouping. This precise example is given in connection with the tanners. While the law explicitly acknowledged the professional distinction between leathercutters, softeners and tanners, it subjected the latter to the exarch and the assessors of the softeners' guild. The following is the language of the law in Boak's translation (*Journal of Economic and Business History*, I [1928–29], 614): "*The leathercutters shall not form a single guild with those who soften the hides, but shall have their own chief appointed by the Prefect's council. So, too, the softeners. These latter shall work with the leathercutters, but shall work the goods supplied by the tanners, who shall prepare the hides used for shoes and not for wagon harness. The tanners shall have a separate organization, seeing that they work with green hides, although they are under the same chief and are subject to the same assessor, for there is a distinction between them. The former are called softeners, but the latter tanners.*" Cf. also Macri, *L'Organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance*, 73 f. This is, incidentally, the only instance expressly cited by the *Επαρχικὸν Βιβλίον* of a separate division within a broader guild with no separate representation.

It seems to me a fair guess that the law has translated here into legal terms a specific situation, viz. the exclusively Jewish membership of the tanning profession. Without mentioning the reason, the law has deprived the tanners of Constantinople of inde-

is indirectly revealed by our sources in connection with its religious-legal implications.

One of the problems was, again, that of the Sabbath rest: would the leaving of hides in the processing solution during the Sabbath mean that work on these hides is continuing on the Lord's day?²⁹ The main question, however, was that of tanning the skins of ritually unclean animals and of the possible change in their status as result of tanning or dyeing. It seems that in this case the Karaites were more stringent than some of the Rabbanites.³⁰ Again, the problem as such had been taken up by earlier authorities also.³¹ Still, its strong recurrence in the context of Byzantine economy is very instructive.

Apart from the references to the "traditionally Jewish" occupations in Byzantium, there are indications of a variety of other jobs which Byzantine Karaites may have been performing. At any rate, the sectaries appear to have been extraordinarily well informed about some of them. This we learn from the rich list of Greek names for work tools as well as from the abundant technical terms in Greek that can be culled from Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher*. Even though the texts themselves have been taken over from older (non-Byzantine) sources, the appended Greek equivalents of the original Hebrew or Arabic terms are ample proof of a living interest and of professional familiarity on the part of Byzantine Karaites with the objects involved. There is, further, the

pendent representation because of their Jewishness. While admitting their separateness, it made them dependent for all practical purposes on the bureaucratic machine of the softeners' guild. This conclusion modifies perforce the picture postulated by Lopez (cf. above, 143, end of note 213). Assuming that no Jewish guilds are mentioned in Byzantium in the tenth century and in the *Book of Prefect*, Lopez dated the earliest governmental toleration of a Jewish guild in the reign of the Comneni. For the Jewish guild of tanners in Constantinople under the Palaeologoi, see Starr, *Romania*, 28 ff.

²⁹ Hadassi, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 55a, Alphabet 145, lists dyeing and tanning among the kinds of work specifically prohibited on the Sabbath. The problem under consideration was, of course, not that of an actual performance of the work on the Sabbath but of the permissibility of leaving the hides on Friday evening in the midst of the tanning process for the next 24 hours: תעורות מושמות במלה וכחומץ.

³⁰ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 11: 8, MS Leiden Warner No. 8, 39a: ונבלתם לא תעו. אמ': הרבנים כי נבלה היא אשר קיבצה עוד וכשר ועצם. ותמהתי על זה. אם יהיה העור לבוד מופרד, על דבריהם אינו נבלה? ... ורבנו הקרקסאני הביא ראיה ... ושאלנו אותם [את הצבעים?] מה צורך אל צביעת העורות וא' [=ואמר] עד שלא יהיה בו מהבשר כדי בגיר זית ... ואמ' הרבנים כי הצביעות תוציא מהמטאה יע' [=יעני] העורות של נבלות מלאכת הגלרים מטרת אותם. וראוי שלא יהיה לזה הרבר מע' [=מענה] על דבריהם. ודע כי הצביעות לא יתכן להיות מטרת על אופן מאופנים.

³¹ *Ibid.*, where the opinion of the tenth-century *Ḳirḳisānī* is followed. There also (in a line which we did not reproduce in the previous note) the somewhat ambiguous statement of 'Anan and his school is interpreted to conform with the later Karaite view.

fairly technical explanation (in Jacob's Commentary on the Pentateuch) of the building of the Tabernacle, or the minute description of the Temple of Solomon (in Jacob's Commentary on Kings). These comments, apart from displaying a wealth of technical knowledge, are again provided with ample Greek glosses. Now, in view of the high standard of technology in the Byzantine Empire, which evoked the praise and admiration of all visitors to the capital, familiarity with technical details on the part of Byzantine Karaite readers should not at all be surprising. Still, chances are that the material at hand not only points to a theoretical acquaintance with the techniques in question, but indicates actual participation in various building jobs and in technical professions.³² On one occasion, for instance, a realistic description is given of a goldsmith's technique.³³

In addition to the industrial occupations listed above, occasional reference is made in the Karaite sources to various service jobs. Mentioned are doormen, vineyard watchmen, maintenance-men of baths, interpreters, etc. Preachers, teachers and synagogue sextons close the list.³⁴

OWNERSHIP OF REAL ESTATE

The deficiencies of the Roman credit system and the low rate of interest on loans made moneylending in Byzantium an unrewarding business. Moreover, unlike Western Europe, the general population of the Empire did not need to depend on the banking services of non-Christians. Not only was interest-bearing credit officially sanctioned and the rate of interest legally fixed and supervised, but the government itself actively

³² The compilation of a complete glossary of Greek terms used by Jacob ben Reuben and the linguistic investigation connected therewith will have to be left, of course, to the specialist in the field. It is to be hoped that L. Marwick, who is preparing a critical edition of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, will append such a comprehensive glossary to the text proper. See additional remarks on Jacob's Greek glosses further on in this chapter, 196 ff.

³³ *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Exodus, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 33b: ידענו כי היו עושים: החכמים לזהב במפוח בעליל [צ"ל: בליל?] והיה כמו מים ואחר שיחקרד ישימו אותו בהטען [בסדן] ומכים אותו בטטיש קטון עד שמרקעים אותו רקעים, עוד יברתו במקרץ.

³⁴ Cf., for instance, *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Exodus, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 25b f.; on Leviticus, 55a; on Deuteronomy, 94a. Cf. also Hadassi's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 55c ff., Alphabets 147-49. With regard to the latter source, it is important to note that (in his discussion of the Sabbath laws) Hadassi enumerates the above jobs *in addition* to the standard list of 39 kinds of work that are prohibited on the Lord's day. The fact that the Byzantine Karaite leader considered it vital to mention specifically some additional professions seems to point to the actual diffusion of these professions among his coreligionists in the Empire.

participated in the banking business. In fact, the edicts of Nicephor I (802–11) and of Basil I (867–86), prohibiting moneylending on interest, turned banking into a state monopoly and raised the rate of interest from a maximum of 4 to 8 percent under Justinian to 16.66 percent under Nicephor.³⁵ On the other hand, the rigid system of controls and state monopolies which governed Byzantine economy made diversion of surplus private capital into industry an uninviting venture, also. The most secure and profitable of all investments was the acquisition of land and other immovable property.³⁶

It is to be assumed that, with the increase of Karaite population and its subsequent socio-economic diversification, the acquisition of real estate in the urban areas by the well-to-do members of the sect became a sound proposition. The acquired property would be rented out to new settlers or to old-timers whose financial standing premitted them to leave their overcrowded quarters or warranted a change in business locale: Rural property was also sought after. Fields, and especially vineyards adjoining the city, would be purchased and leased to sharecroppers. With the rising interest in landed estate, even beasts of work and of burden seemed to have been a good investment, for they could be hired out for regular and seasonal work.³⁷

Again, we do not possess a single Byzantine Karaite deed of sale or a lease-contract mentioning Karaite owners or tenants.³⁸ Nor do we have concrete *literary* evidence mentioning specific persons of Karaite creed and their property, in a manner similar to, say, the Rabbanite family-chronicle of Aḥima'as.³⁹ But the discussions in Byzantine Karaite literature of religious-legal problems arising from such ownership may reveal to us indirectly the general situation.

Thus, Karaites are enjoined to refrain from charging rent for the use on Sabbaths and holidays of apartments, dwelling houses, shops, baths

³⁵ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 34; S. Katz, "Some Aspects of Economic Life in the Byz. Empire," *Pacific Historical Review*, VII (1938), 33 f.; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 153 f. For details on the interest rate and its relation to the monetary changes in the Empire, cf. Ostrogorsky's note 1 to p. 154. These data were most recently utilized by Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, 198, when describing the general share of Jews in moneylending in the High Middle Ages.

³⁶ Katz, *op. cit.*

³⁷ See the passages quoted below, notes 40–43.

³⁸ Cf., for instance, the *documentary* material relating to the Rabbanites, in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 194, Nos. 137–38.

³⁹ Cf. *Megillath Aḥima'as* (ed. Klar), 36, where Amittay is reported to have retired "one day to his vineyard, his estate outside the town." See Starr, *op. cit.*, 141 f., No. 81.

The impression one derives is that, at the most, a few vineyards on the outskirts of towns were taken care of by Karaite laborers. As is still the custom to this day in many Mediterranean countries, some families may have been tending a vine, or a fig or another fruit tree in their backyard within the city perimeter.⁴⁷ Yet, in general, *Karaite settlement in Byzantium was overwhelmingly urban* in the character of its dwellings and in the manner in which its members earned their livelihood. The example of the Jewish farmer community at Krisa, reported by Benjamin of Tudela,⁴⁸ had, as far as we know, no Karaite counterpart. Indeed, some Palestino-centric zealots among the sectarians may have even viewed the possession of land in the Diaspora as an infringement on the special position which the *Land* of Israel should enjoy insofar as the territorial aspirations of the Jew are concerned. "In the event the Israelites will possess fields in the lands of the Gentiles, a curse will descend on these possessions," they are reported to have been arguing. But this extreme view must have been shared by very few and was of no real consequence.⁴⁹

INCREASING URBANIZATION

The almost exclusively urban character of Byzantine Karaism should not, of course, be viewed as a phenomenon inherent in Karaism as a movement. Karaite legislation put no special obstacles in the path of the Jewish farmer in the Diaspora. Rather, while still enjoining, along with the Rabbanites, the observance of the Sabbatical year (*shemittah*) as a praiseworthy custom, though not as a legal obligation,⁵⁰ it waived such biblical laws as *kil'ayim* (i.e., mingling two kinds of seeds),⁵¹ *bikkūrim* (=first fruit offering) and the tithe (*ma'aser*).⁵²

⁴⁷ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 56a, Alphabet 148: תאנה גפן וכל אילן הנטוע בחצר. רבביה מוכני' לך לבצור מומן ימי החול ויוכנו לך ביום קדש. This should be read in the context of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Genoese documents which leave no doubt about the semi-rural character of the Péra quarter. In fact, if credence be given to the Muslim geographer Abū'l-Fidā', a similar impression could be gained in the early fourteenth century from other sections of Constantinople as well. Cf. G. I. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIIIe siècle*, 92 f.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Itinerary* (ed. Asher), Hebrew Section, 16, English Section, 46 f.; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 229, No. 182 (cf. there also, 28).

⁴⁹ See the minority opinion (*dabar aher*) as reported by Jacob ben Reuben, *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Deut. 28:38, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 97a: [זרע רב תוציא השדה ומעט: וראו ד"א אם יהיו להם שדות בארצות הגויים תהיה בהם מארה תאסוף]... ד"א אם יהיו להם שדות בארצות הגויים תהיה בהם מארה.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Lev. 25:2 ff., Leiden MS Warner 8, 56a: וראו השמטה: ואשר היא היום ביד העדה.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 50b, on Lev. 19:19: [שלא של כלאים] שזרע: ואמר יפת הלוי עתה לא תאסר גטיעה חריעה [=של כלאים] שזרע: אדם בשדה א' ואפי' לו לקח אדם בבפר חטים ושעורים ועדשים [ו]יפור הכל במק' א' לא היה יאסר.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 95b, on Deuteronomy 26: ובגולה לא בכורים ולא ראשית ומעשר אלא לקט ושכחה.

*The urban character of Byzantine Karaite economy reflected merely the above-described special circumstances under which Karaism has appeared on the Byzantine horizon. Yet, in the last analysis, it was truly mirroring both the basic transformation of Byzantine Jewish economy in general in the tenth and the eleventh centuries and the high degree of urbanization which the Empire as a whole attained at that time. "The number of cities [in the Byzantine Empire] was very large," says Andréadès. "Benjamin of Tudela found them on his route in almost every day's journey."*⁵³ In all these cities and towns Benjamin encountered a Jewish population. The social and economic structure of the Byzantine Rabbanites, too, was now irretrievably geared to a trend of full urbanization. *Krisa* had no duplicate among the Rabbanites either. Whatever Rabbanite agricultural groups were still existing, they constituted only vestiges of an older period.

Thus, Karaism, the younger branch of Judaism on Byzantine soil, was in its urbanized character merely manifesting the dominant economic line of Byzantine Jewry in general. It manifested this line more clearly, precisely because it was younger and because it plunged, unhampered by earlier ties or economic inertia, into the very thick of the current.⁵⁴ When the early formative period of Byzantine Karaism came to an end, the respective social and economic structures of both branches of Jewry in the Empire were, in their major outlines, identical.

TAXATION

The problem of Jewish taxation in Byzantium in the period covered by the present study has not found as yet a solution that would be acceptable to all scholars. After debating the matter at great length,⁵⁵

גלבר. The *leḳeṣ* and *shikḥah* were probably maintained because of their purely charitable character. The abolition of the tithe in the Diaspora should perhaps be viewed in the context of the ninth- and tenth-century "de-'Ananization" of the movement in Palestine. In an effort to raise the status of the diasporic synagogue (see Introd., above, 16) and to ensure the funds needed for its proper institutional functioning, 'Anan assigned to it the tithes (including tithe on metals), the *bikkūrim*, the half-shekel, and the priestly and levitical gifts. Cf. his *Book of Precepts*, ed. Schechter (*Documents of Jewish Sectaries*, II), 3 ff.

⁵³ On urbanization as a basic trend in general Byzantine economy of the period under discussion, cf. Andréadès, in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 53.

⁵⁴ Conceivably, this *youthful urban character of Karaism in Byzantium* was in part responsible for the Karaites' excelling the Rabbanites in the extent of their Greek literacy. See below, 195.

⁵⁵ Cf. A. Andréadès, "Les Juifs et le fisc dans l'Empire byzantin," *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, I, 7 ff.

Andréadès finally concurred with Dölger's theory⁵⁶ that Byzantine Jews were subject to a special tax, on a par with their brethren in Islamic countries and in Western Europe. The burden of that tax lay not in its actual financial value, but rather in its symbolic quality as a degrading recognition tax, sealing the Jew's inferior status in the Christian State.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Starr insisted that the Jew's tax burden in the Empire was no greater than that of his Christian neighbor.⁵⁸ Later, Starr conceded the "symbolism" of the tax "in those situations in which we know definitely that a special tax was levied." In such cases, however, so he continued to argue, "the tax involved more than a nominal sum," and "served not as a supplement but *in lieu of all other taxes.*"⁵⁹

Most recently, Professor Baron concluded on the basis of the extant material that, "while special taxes were neither consistent nor universal, they were collected at various times in various parts of the Empire."⁶⁰ Whatever the case, there is no doubt that the Karaites bore the same tax obligations as their Rabbanite compatriots.

Byzantine Karaite literature yielded at least two explicit references to the tax burden, employing in both cases the general Hebrew appellation for levies (*mass*) and the specific term *gulgoleth*, i.e., capitation [tax], the *kephalétiôn*. Thus, when commenting on the Book of Nahum, a Karaite exegete states the following:

"And I will cut off thy prey" (Nahum 2:4)—by this the levies are meant and capitation tax. "And the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard" (*ibid.*), for God will destroy the messengers sent to each city [for the purpose of collecting taxes].

In the same vein, Isaiah's prophecy against "them that oppress thee" (Is. 49:26) is referred by the commentator to "those who take count of the *capita* and levy taxes."⁶¹

⁵⁶ F. Dölger, "Die Frage der Judensteuer in Byzanz," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, XXVI (1933), 1 ff.; *idem*, *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung*, 50.

⁵⁷ Andréadès, "The Jews in the Byzantine Empire," *Economic History*, III (1934), 18; see also his note to this effect in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 82, note 3.

Runciman, too (*Cambridge Economic History*, II, 117), thinks that there was a capitation tax in Byzantium, but it "probably was only applied to non-Christians and foreigners."

⁵⁸ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 17. See there, 11 ff., Starr's restatement of the whole problem of Jewish taxation in Byzantium.

⁵⁹ Cf. the special chapter on "Taxation," in his *Romania*, 111 ff.

⁶⁰ *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), III, 190 ff.

⁶¹ Cf. the printed edition of *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Nahum, 18d: טרפן. המס ויגולגאות. מלאככה. שיכרית לשלחים אל כל עיר ועיר

Similarity see in the unpublished Isaiah section of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, Leiden MS Warner

To what extent the above references reflect Byzantine conditions is difficult to say. For all we know, they may have been translated from earlier sources which alluded to the *jizya* imposed on non-Muslims in the Caliphate. This point, too, cannot be clarified as long as the Arabic Karaite texts underlying the Hebrew Karaite compilations in Byzantium remain undiscovered or unpublished. Accordingly, these passages are offered here with the same stress on the need for caution as in the above texts dealing with the economic conditions.

Whatever the case, the bitterness of the complaints against the tax burden cannot be taken too seriously as a barometer of alleged fiscal oppression in Byzantium. Dislike for taxes is a universal phenomenon. In the ancient and medieval political context such dislike was felt even more strongly, since exaction of tribute and levying taxes were identified with arbitrary authority and tyranny. Moreover, in the present instance the expression of that natural aversion to taxes was conditioned also by the character of the biblical text which the commentator had at hand. While interpreting the ancient words as an allusion to contemporary conditions, after the fashion of all medieval commentators, the author could not help adopting the intensity of expression that was inherent in the text he was explaining.

And yet, all these qualifications notwithstanding, the very inclusion of the above references in a compilation designed for Byzantine Karaite readers and the precision of terminology employed therein are not without significance; they possibly may add to our understanding of the Byzantine Karaite scene and to the clarification of the general problem of Jewish taxation in the Byzantine Empire.

COMMUNICATION WITH PALESTINE

In retracting the early steps of the Karaites in Byzantium, our continuing stress on the features which were common to both the Karaite and the Rabbanite societies should not obscure the consciousness of separateness that must have pervaded the Karaite communities.⁶² This is true of the Karaites who remained after the conquest in their old locale, now incorporated in the Byzantine Empire, and also of those who moved westwards and established outposts of Karaism in localities in which the sect was previously unknown.

No. 8, 158b: מוֹיֵךְ. אֵלֶּיךָ הַטּוֹפְרִים לְבִלְגָאִתּוֹ וְלִקְרִיַם חֶמֶס. Incidentally, the same term *gulgoleth*, employed at the end of the eleventh century in Byzantine Karaite literature, appears also in the well-known epistle describing the messianic upheaval in Thessalonica in 1096. Cf. Mann, "The Messianic Movements in the Time of the Early Crusades," *Hat-teḳūfah*, XXIII (1925), 253 ff.; Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 205.

⁶² Cf. our "Fourth Premise," above, 53 ff.

The sectarian separatism found its natural expression in two major spheres: a) religious observances, and b) the forging of strong ties with Karaism abroad. As for religious observances—we intend to examine them only insofar as they are unique to *Byzantine* Karaism, i.e., whenever they reflect new trends and moods, reveal conflicts in aims and ideas within the Byzantine Karaite society, or shed light on external forces as they come into play. Indeed, the *literary* material, appearing from the middle of the eleventh century on, will enable us in a later chapter of this study to inquire into the Karaite-Rabbanite controversies in Byzantium over details of religious law and rite. It will also assist us in understanding the eventual estrangement of Byzantine Karaism from ways and rules adhered to by other branches of the movement. However, no such material is available prior to the mid-eleventh century. Hence, we must assume that in the formative, preliterate period under review the Karaites in Byzantium continued to cultivate their ritual as well as they could, according to the tradition of the lands of their origins.

On the other hand, those communal activities which fall outside the realm of specifically religious observances are definitely within the scope of our present investigation. Of these, the most important was keeping in closest touch with Palestine; there, especially in Jerusalem, a genuine spiritual center of Karaism was developing in the tenth and the eleventh centuries.⁶³ Radiating an example of piety and national awareness, which was personified in the Order of the "Mourners of Zion," Karaite Jerusalem was also the seat of highly productive scholarship in all fields of Jewish interest, as well as in general philosophy and theology. It even earned the respect and praise of Rabbanite contemporaries.⁶⁴

⁶³ On the Karaite center in Jerusalem see Poznański's Hebrew essay in Luncz's *Jerusalem*, X (1913), 83 ff., and, ultimately, Mann, "The Karaite Settlement in Palestine till the First Crusade," in his *Texts and Studies*, II, 3 ff.

⁶⁴ On the contemporaneous Rabbanite expression of respect for the quality of learning to be found among the Karaite "Teachers of Jerusalem" (משלמי אלמקאדסה) and "Exegetes of Jerusalem" (מפסרי אלמקאדסה), see the statement of 'Alī ben Israel Allūf, as published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 95 f. Among the great names of that Golden Age, those of Joseph ben Noah, Yefeth ben 'Alī, Sahl Abū-s-Surri ben Mašliḥ, Joseph al-Baṣīr, Abū'l-Faraj Harūn and Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah stand out as lasting guideposts of sectarian spiritual endeavor.

On Joseph ben Noah see S. Skoss, *The Arabic Commentary of 'Alī ben Suleimān on the Book of Genesis*, 4 ff. On Yefeth ben 'Alī see above, 94, note 21. For Sahl ben Mašliḥ cf. above, 37, end of note 27. For Joseph al-Baṣīr see the literature cited on p. 81, note 65.

On the "Jerusalem grammarian," Abū'l-Faraj Harūn, whom Abraham Ibn Ezra, unaware of his sectarian identity, placed second only to Saadyah Gaon, cf. W. Bacher,

Constant communication with Palestine would have been imperative under any circumstances. Doctrinally opposed to precalculated calendation, the Karaites were dependent on direct observation of the ripening of new crops in the Holy Land in order to determine the New Year and the festivals. References to such contacts with Palestine will be cited in a later chapter, where they chronologically belong.⁶⁵ Still, it must be observed that in these documents, all of which stem from periods later than the mid-eleventh century, the recourse to Palestinian authorities in calendar problems appears as an already established practice. Such practice must have evidently existed much earlier, i.e., also in the preliterate, formative stage of the movement in Byzantium. Indeed, it most probably was the direct continuation of a pre-Byzantine tradition, brought along by the settlers from their countries of origin—from Northern Syria and the adjoining provinces.

THE JERUSALEM ACADEMY

The relationship with Palestine was stimulated through personal contacts. Pilgrims would visit the Holy Land in the best spirit of ancient Jewish tradition, and students would travel to the Bakhtawī Academy in the Karaite quarter of Jerusalem in quest of learning.⁶⁶ As a rule, travel and population movements were discouraged by the Byzantine authorities for administrative and fiscal reasons.⁶⁷ However, pilgrimage to the Land of the Bible and journeys for the purpose of study were regarded by government and public opinion alike as meritorious deeds of devotion.⁶⁸

“Le grammairien anonyme de Jerusalem et son livre,” *REJ*, XXX (1895), 232 ff.; Poznański, “Aboul-Faradj Haroun ben al-Faradj le grammairien de Jerusalem et son Mouschtamil,” *REJ*, XXXIII (1896), 24 ff., 197 ff.; *idem*, “Nouveaux renseignements sur Aboul-Faradj et ses ouvrages,” *REJ*, LVI (1908), 42 ff.; H. Hirschfeld, *Literary History of Hebrew Grammarians and Lexicographers*, 50 ff.; Skoss, *The Arabic Commentary of 'Ali ben Suleimān on the Book of Genesis*, 11 ff. Cf. also Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshūb*, II, Introd., 50 ff., and the texts there (see Index, s.v.).

On Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah see above, 82, note 66.

The history of the Golden Age of Karaism in Palestine was composed till now of a series of bio-bibliographies only. The time has come, so it seems, for that history to be rewritten and reappraised.

⁶⁵ For the Palestino-centric orientation of the Karaites in their *abib* system of calendation, see the special chapter on “Calendar Feuds,” below. Cf. also my “Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade,” *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 25 ff.

⁶⁶ On Joseph ben Bakhtawī and his *ḥaṣer* (courtyard) in Jerusalem, see briefly Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 29 f.

⁶⁷ Cf. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization*, 205. See also above, 138.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 210, 223. See also in general the chapter on “The Pilgrims of Christ,” in Runciman’s *History of the Crusades*, I, 38 ff.

This general climate of opinion was an added stimulus to the revered practice of pilgrimage and study in Palestine which was shared by Jewish students from all over the Diaspora.

From all the countries of the Greeks, too, and from other lands [reports a Persian traveler in 1047], the Christians and the Jews come up to Jerusalem in great numbers in order to visit the Church and the Synagogue that are there.⁶⁹

Moreover, though no direct evidence is available, it stands to reason that study trips to Jerusalem by brilliant young Karaites were more than an expression of a personal thirst for knowledge on the part of the *individuals* concerned. They were, to a great extent, a manifestation of *communal* policy. The study trips satisfied three important needs: a) the need, expressed in recurrent appeals from Jerusalem, for sending to Palestine Karaite representatives from every community in the Diaspora in order to strengthen the spiritual capital of Karaism;⁷⁰ b) the need for training Byzantine youth in Jerusalem for future positions of leadership in their

⁶⁹ Cf. Nāšir-i-Khusrau, in his *Diary of a Journey through Syria and Palestine*, Eng. tr. by G. Le Strange, in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, IV, 23.

⁷⁰ Cf. the appeal of the ninth-century Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, published by Mann, "A Tract of an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921-22), 257 ff., abridged English version by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 34 ff. On Ḳūmisī's authorship of the tract see the result of later studies by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 5. In an argument with "the scoundrels who are among Israel," Daniel emphasizes his conviction that "the Lord himself has commanded the men of the Exile to come to Jerusalem and to stand within it" (Nemoy's translation, *Karaite Anthology*, 35 f.). "Therefore it is incumbent upon you who fear the Lord to come to Jerusalem and dwell in it." Daniel draws up, consequently, a realistic plan according to which the communities of the Exile should "send at least five men from each city in the Dispersion, together with their sustenance, so that we may form a consolidated group" (cf. my remarks above, 55, note 74, as well as the quotations given in the *Introd.*, 22, and in Chapter VII, below).

Similarly, the tenth-century Karaite missionary, Sahl ben Mašliaḥ, believed that in coming to Jerusalem the immigrants were fulfilling a Divine command (*mišwah*). Invoking Jeremiah 3:14, he calls for "one from a city and two from a family, old and young," to join the ranks of the "Mourners of Zion." Cf. the Hebrew Introduction to his *Arabic Book of Precepts*, edited by Harkavy in his "Me'assef Nidaḥim—XIII," *Hammeliš* (1879), 639. Cf. also Sahl's *Epistle to Jacob ben Samuel* (Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṣē*, App. III, 25 ff.; abridged English version by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 111 ff.), which has often been quoted in the preceding pages. Sahl makes definite reference to the fact that the Karaites, "by means of their good admonition and their writings to their brethren abroad, have assembled at Jerusalem righteous and pious men" (*Liḳḳūṣē*, 30; Nemoy, 112).

See also the poetical exhortation by Yefeth ben 'Alī, published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 31 f., Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 107 f.: "Ye Mourners of Zion, remember your Mother from afar; sit not in gladness, in the company of the playful. Your Holy House is in the hands of strangers, yet you are far away. The enemies of God are within it, yet you are unmindful. Strive ye to appear before him."

native communities;⁷¹ and c) the need to answer effectively the challenge posed by the Rabbanite practice of sending students from Byzantium to the geonic academies in Babylonia.⁷²

The journey of Tobias ben Moses for the purpose of study in Jerusalem some time in the 30's of the eleventh century has already been mentioned.⁷³ The practice of sending students from Byzantium to Palestine continued unabated for some thirty more years. Thus, we possess the name of another Byzantine Karaite who studied there a generation after Tobias. He is Jacob ben Simon, known primarily through his Hebrew translation of an important treatise on the Karaite law of incest composed in Arabic by his Palestinian mentor, Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah.⁷⁴ Like Tobias, his older contemporary, Jacob also devoted

⁷¹ This point is valid for the eleventh century only; there is no doubting of the fact that the conscious endeavor of the Jerusalem center in the ninth and tenth centuries was to induce Karaite enthusiasts from abroad to settle permanently in Palestine. Indeed, even with regard to the later period there is no definite proof to the effect that training of promising youths from the Diaspora in Jerusalem, in order to have them return to their native lands, actually was the official policy of the Palestinian mentors. All we know for sure is the fact that in reality several of these students did return home and subsequently occupied positions of leadership in their communities. There is also room for reasoning that this procedure agreed with the policies and needs of the Diaspora communities, whether the Palestinian leaders approved of it or not. At any rate, the idealistic presentation of the Jerusalem center under Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah (11th cent.) as a kind of headquarters, masterminding the erection of new sectarian branches in the Diaspora and providing them with leaders trained in the Palestinian Karaite academy, is a myth, pure and simple. Cf. my critical comments on the subject in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 190 ff., and in Chapters V and VIII, below.

It was not before 400 years have passed that another great spiritual center of the sect—that in Constantinople, under the leadership of Eijjah Bashyachi—consciously shouldered the financial and academic responsibility for training in its midst students from distant communities, with the express purpose of having them return to their countries of origin and lead the Karaite flock there. Cf. the correspondence on the subject between Elijah Bashyachi and the communities of Troki (Lithuania) and Luck (Volhynia), dating 1483-87, as published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1139-77. See also, in brief, in my article on Bashyachi, *Enşiklopedyah 'Ivrith* (Encyclopaedia Hebraica), IX, 962 f.

⁷² See the responsum by the eleventh-century Hai Gaon, first published by Harkavy in his *Studien und Mittheilungen*, IV, 105 f., No. 225. Cf. Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 112; Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as Source of Jewish History," *JQR* (N.S.), VII (1917), 488; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 180, No. 122. Cf. also the lamentation poem of Shemū'el han-Nagid upon the death of Hai, *Kol Shirē R. Shemū'el han-Nagid* (ed. Habermann), III, 132: כלל [=להאי] ילירם לך ארץ ערבית וראוניה אשר גדל על חורה וטפת להוריה.

⁷³ See above, 43 f., 49 ff., and my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 1 ff.

⁷⁴ On Jacob ben Simon, whom Pinsker rightly considers the pupil of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah (*Likkūṭē*, App., Note X, 172; cf. also 93), and on his translation of his master's *Kitāb al-'Arayoth* (*Sefer hay-Yashar*), cf. I. Markon's Introduction to his

his energies to the diffusion in his native country of the knowledge he acquired at the feet of the saintly masters in Jerusalem.

The flow of Karaite students from the Empire to Palestine would most probably have been maintained for many more years but for the Seljūk conquest of the Holy City in 1071 C.E. This event spelled the end of organized Jewish life in Jerusalem.⁷⁵

ARABIC AND HEBREW

Karaite literary activity in Byzantium began, some time in the 40's or 50's of the eleventh century. It originated in those circles of young Byzantine Karaites who received their training in Jerusalem. In fact, its earliest creations have even been composed in Palestine proper. This story will be unfolded in the last chapter of the present study. Here we shall cite only its linguistic aspects, in the context of the Karaites' social and cultural integration in their Byzantine environment.

In its earliest stages, Byzantine Karaite literature consisted mainly of Hebrew compilations and translations of those Arabic Karaite classics which the Karaite students, hailing from Byzantium, had studied in Palestine.⁷⁶ The confusion with regard to ascertaining the authorship of many a Karaite (Arabic) original and of its (Hebrew) translation is well known to every student of Karaite literature.⁷⁷ On the basis of a compre-

edition of that work. Cf. also M. Schreiner, *Studien über Jeschuah ben Jehudah*; Mann, *Texts and Studien*, II, 43, 287; and my remarks in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), note 26. See, however, M. Steinschneider's doubts as to the nature of Jacob's relationship to Yeshū'ah, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, II, 943.

⁷⁵ Cf. Poznański, *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 667a; Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimids*, I, 198 f.; Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshūb*, II, Introd., 18, 31, 39; S. D. Goitein, "Contemporary Letters on the Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders," *JJS*, III (1952), 162 ff., and *Zion*, XVII (1952), 129 ff.

⁷⁶ Cf. the appropriate paragraphs in Steinschneider's *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters* and *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*; P. F. Frankl, "Karaiten oder Karäer," *Ersch und Gruber Enc.*, Section Two, XXXIII, 17b; *idem*, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*; and the Byzantine story in any of the later encyclopedia articles about Karaism (see the references above, 3, note 1).

⁷⁷ Cf. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 20 f. On concluding his investigation of Karaite translations and of their originals, a dismayed Steinschneider had this to say (*Hebr. Übersetzungen*, II, 948): "Mit der wohlthuenden Empfindung, mit welcher man einen finsternen Wald verlässt, trennen wir uns von den Karaiten und den Bearbeitern ihrer Literatur, wo alter Betrug durch Kritiklosigkeit, Plagiarismus, wissen- und gewissenlose Industrie renovirt und aufgeputzt erscheint." My personal appraisal of Karaite literature fails to concur with the harsh verdict of the grand old builder of Jewish bibliography. Still, in view of the perplexing confusion confronting the student of Karaism in elementary matters of authorship and classification, the irritation of the great "master of detail" (as Professor Baron calls him, *A. Marx Jubilee Volume*, 143) is more than understandable.

hensive study of Karaite compositions available to date in print or in manuscript form, it seems to me that the following rule may serve as a fair guide to the "language problem" of the literature created by Karaites in Palestine and Byzantium during the period of our immediate concern:

*All Hebrew Karaite works, stemming from the late ninth and the early tenth century (i.e., from the al-Ḳūmisī school), may be a priori considered Palestinian Hebrew originals. However, all available Hebrew versions of those legalistic, exegetic, and philosophical works which were composed later in the tenth and all through the eleventh century may be a priori assumed to be Byzantine translations of Palestinian Arabic originals.*⁷⁸

This rule does not apply to polemical and paitanic writings, the nature and language of which were determined in each case by peculiar needs and situations.⁷⁹

It is often tacitly assumed that the Byzantine students knew very little Arabic prior to their arrival in Jerusalem, so that, at best, they could have mastered only its rudiments during their sojourn in the Holy City. This could be one of the reasons for the mediocre quality of the early Byzantine Karaite writings.⁸⁰ A corollary of this reasoning is, of course, the assumption that the translation of the Arabic works into Hebrew was a matter of linguistic necessity, since the Byzantine Karaite reader was allegedly unfamiliar with the language in which the Karaite classics were written.⁸¹

However, one can hardly accept this reasoning, owing to two major factors: a) the Karaites who settled in Byzantium came from Arabic-speaking lands in the East, and their mother-tongue must have survived

⁷⁸ This, of course, opposes Pinsker, *Likḳuṣē Ḳadmoniyoth*, App., Note XIV, 195 ff., who attributed, for instance, to Joseph al-Baṣir the available Hebrew versions of his philosophical writings, including the Arabic and Greek expressions therein. Pinsker's view was rejected long ago by Frankl, Poznański, and others. Cf. above, 80, note 58.

⁷⁹ To mention only works already quoted in the present study, this last category includes, for instance, the Hebrew *Epistle* of Sahl ben Maṣliāh and his poetic Introduction to the *Book of Precepts*; Salman ben Yerūham's *Book of the Wars of the Lord*; and Yefeth ben 'Alī's *piyyūt* (above, 187, end of note 70), inserted into the MS of his Arabic translation and commentary on Leviticus.

⁸⁰ The other "extenuating" circumstance for the meager quality of Byzantine-Karaite writings was "haste." The preparation of such writings [it is argued] was perforce expedited in great haste, so that wandering missionaries could take them along without delay on their tours of duty. Cf. Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 13. See my reservations in regard to this "propaganda myth," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 191 ff., and in Chapter VIII, below.

⁸¹ Frankl, *Ersch und Gruber Enz.*, Section Two, XXXIII, 17b: "Zunächst erweckte das Bedürfnis die arabisch-karäische Literatur auch der nicht-arabisch, sondern griechisch sprechenden karäischen Bevölkerung zugänglich zu machen, die Thätigkeit eines Übersetzers oder einer Schule von Übersetzern."

among them for some time; b) the early Byzantine Karaites continuously maintained close commercial and spiritual relations with the Karaite communities of Palestine and Egypt. While letters of religious or communal content may have been written in Hebrew, commercial correspondence as well as oral contacts and negotiations could not have been possible except through the medium of the Arabic tongue.⁸²

LINGUISTIC INADEQUACY

The fact is that the Byzantine Karaites' knowledge of *both* Hebrew and Arabic was poor, as was already noted by their thirteenth-century compatriot, Aaron ben Joseph.⁸³ Moreover, we may even state with confidence that, of the two, their Hebrew was initially poorer than their Arabic, since it remained only an instrument of prayer and biblical study.

It may be useful to recall in this connection Yehūdah ibn Tibbōn's criticism of his predecessors in the field of Hebrew translations.⁸⁴ The Rabbanite master-translator, who lived almost a century after the great flurry of translation activity among the Byzantine Karaites, found three major faults with the Hebrew translators of the pre-Tibbonid era: 1) insufficient knowledge of Hebrew; 2) insufficient knowledge of

⁸² Thus, for instance, most of the communal correspondence, as preserved in the Cairo Genizah, was written in Hebrew even though it passed between Palestine and Egypt, both Arabic-speaking countries. Cf. Vol. II of Mann's *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimids*. On the other hand, commercial correspondence as well as personal letters yielded by the Genizah were mainly written in Arabic. This is especially evident from the recent research of Professor Goitein and his students on the Arabic Genizah. Cf., for instance, the latest comments by N. Golb, "Legal Documents from the Cairo Genizah," *JSS*, XX (1958), esp. 19.

[For such Arabic communication from Byzantium to Egypt, published recently by Goitein, see the addendum above, 117, note 107a.]

⁸³ Cf. Aaron's statement in the Introduction to his commentary on Joshua-Isaiah, *Mibḥar Yesharim* (edited by the Karaite press of Gozlow in 1836 jointly with the Jeremiah-Chronicles section of *Sefer ha-'Osher*), 2a: ערבי ללשון עברי והמעתיק לא היה בקי בשתי הלשונות כי ידוע כי ספריהם נעתיקו מלשון. Thus also the fifteenth-century Elijah Bashyachi, in *Addereth Eliyyahū* (ed. 1870; our quotation is on the first [unnumbered] page of the Introduction): והעתיקם מלשון הערב. וספריהם מלשון עברי ולא היה שחברו ספריהם מלשון הערב. והעתיקם מלשון עברי ולא היה שחברו ספריהם מלשון הערב. הקדוש לא יערב. מפני קוצר ידיעת המעתיק הראשון בחכמת הלשון (See my remarks on this text, in *Tarbiz*, XXV [1955], 44 f., note 6.)

Even Tobias ben Moses, the greatest of Byzantine Karaite translators, felt uneasy about the grammatical inaccuracies that could be detected in the translation underlying his compilation *Oṣar Nehmad* on Leviticus. Cf. the fragment quoted and discussed at length in Chapter VIII, below.

⁸⁴ In the Introduction to his Hebrew translation of Baḥya ibn Paḳūda's *Höboth hal-Lebaboth*.

Arabic; 3) insufficient knowledge of subject-matter. Since one can hardly accuse a Tobias ben Moses, say, of unfamiliarity with the subject of his studies, we must put the blame for the poor translations of his school on general linguistic inadequacy.⁸⁵

Even objectively speaking, the eleventh-century Hebrew was a rather unwieldy companion for scholarly adventure. It lacked pliability and basic philosophical terminology, and many an indispensable expression or term had to be coined as the translation was progressing. Arabic, on the other hand, was the language of philosophy and science. It undoubtedly was employed in daily usage by the Byzantine traveler, whether negotiating a deal in the Alexandrian market or participating in a discussion at the Jerusalem academy. This by no means suggests thorough mastery of the Arabic language and literature on the part of the average Byzantine Karaite. Rather, if a modern illustration may be permitted,⁸⁶ it was a working familiarity with the language, derived in the same way as the familiarity of a second-generation American Jew with the Yiddish of his immigrant father. Of course, due to other circumstances, the Byzantine son knew infinitely more of his parental tongue than does his modern American counterpart, and this was especially true of the scholar to whom Arabic was an indispensable tool of research.⁸⁷

Hence, the customary view that the early Byzantine Karaite translations from the Arabic into Hebrew were prompted by the need to make these works comprehensible to the Karaite reading public in Byzantium⁸⁸ is hardly adequate, at least for the middle and early second half of the eleventh century. The quality of the Hebrew in these works was often so poor that the meaning would remain unintelligible unless the translations were checked against the Arabic originals. Occasionally, whole Arabic clauses were incorporated into the Hebrew version without

⁸⁵ Cf. P. F. Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 11.

⁸⁶ In spite of my reluctance to "modernize," I feel it is permissible to use the present illustration, esp. since an analogy between the demographic composition of the Empire and the American "melting pot" had already been drawn by Runciman in his review of Byzantine conditions. Cf. his *Romanus Lecapenus*, 32 f. See also below, 194.

⁸⁷ Here is the occasion to add that in visualizing early Byzantine Karaites not as militant missionaries but as an immigrant society, confronted with grave problems of economic and cultural adjustment—even of loyalty—and ultimately integrating in its environment, I often found illuminating parallels with the American Jewish scene. These observations may perhaps serve in some future connection the basis for a comparative sociological study.

⁸⁸ See above, 190, note 81.

being translated at all. Furthermore, Greek glosses were introduced extensively into the biblical commentaries and philosophical treatises.⁸⁹

From these facts we must conclude that *reasons other than the diffusion of Hebrew among the rank and file of the Byzantine Karaite population or the latter's unfamiliarity with Arabic motivated the Hebrew Karaite translation activity in mid-eleventh-century Byzantium*. Here again our aforementioned analogy with modern American Jewish life could be continued. Just as the interest in Hebrew among Jewish immigrants to American shores, and even more so among their descendants today, was prompted by ideological motives rather than by an alleged convenience of the Hebrew language as a mass medium of communication, so also the hebraization of Karaism in Byzantium had little to do with linguistic utility. We shall discuss, however, this problem in Chapter VIII of the present volume, when the first literary attempts of Byzantine Karaites will be viewed against the background of the new environment.

GREEK AND THE CLASSICIST REVIVAL

While Arabic remained, to a great extent, an auxiliary language to the first generations of Byzantine Karaites, Greek very soon achieved priority. Obviously, the greater the number of native (hence Greek-speaking) Jews who joined the sect, whether through natural increase or conversion to the Karaite creed, the faster was the grecization of Karaism in its Byzantine environment.⁹⁰

Again, no record of this linguistic development is available from the early formative years of Karaism in Byzantium. But from the extent and variety of the Greek glosses in the very first literary works of Byzantine Karaites, it is evident that by the middle of the eleventh century Greek was the mother-tongue of the second and third generations of Karaites in the Empire.

To Byzantium and the Byzantines the Greek language was infinitely more than a mere vehicle for oral and literary communication. The Byzantine Empire was a vast sea of heterogeneous citizenry, constantly swelled by tributaries of different races, ethnic groups and linguistic

⁸⁹ Frankl, *Beiträge*, 4, described this trilingualism as "jenes monströse Gemengsel dreier Sprachen." See also *ibid.*, 12 f., and above, 190, note 80, for Frankl's attempt to explain the untranslated Arabic clauses through a theory of "haste." My own explanation of that linguistic phenomenon is given below, in Chapter VIII of this study. On the Greek glosses see further on in the present chapter.

⁹⁰ For (eleventh-century?) conversions to Karaism, see the discussion of a passage from *Oşar Neḥmad*, below, Chapter VI (and note 25 to that chapter).

units.⁹¹ In this sense it recalls the demographic composition of the United States of America.⁹² There were two great forces that united this mixture of peoples of all origins and effectively substituted for the consciousness of belonging to one nationality. These two forces were the Orthodox Church and "the language of the Romans" (which in Byzantium meant Greek).⁹³ The Jews, Rabbanites and Karaites alike, quite naturally excluded themselves from the levelling effect of the Church. Their integration in the national language of the country must therefore have seemed to them even more imperative.⁹⁴

It was noted long ago that whereas the Rabbanite literary productions in Byzantium show the effects of contact with colloquial Greek only, the Karaites reveal an unmistakable familiarity with Greek philosophical terminology.⁹⁵ While this fact is of particular interest to the student of Karaite literature, it serves also as valuable information for historical investigation, for it supplements from a new angle our general picture of the early formative years of Byzantine Karaism.

⁹¹ On the characteristics of the racial, ethnic and religious conglomeration that was Byzantium under the Macedonian dynasty, see Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 42; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 31 f.; *idem*, *Byzantine Civilization*, 179 ff.; E. Stein, "Introduction à l'histoire et aux institutions byzantines," *Traditio* (Fordham University), VII (1949-51), esp. 154 ff.

⁹² See above, 192, note 86.

⁹³ Cf. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization*, 231; Diehl, *History of the Byz. Empire*, 92 f.; *idem*, *Les grands problèmes de l'histoire byzantine*, 45; and in *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 736.

⁹⁴ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 50, 244. For reconstruction of Greek glosses in Karaite literature. see, for instance, P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien", *MGWJ*, XXXI (1882) and XXXIII (1884); *idem*, *Ersch und Gruber Encz.*, Section Two, XXXIII, 18; *idem*, *Ein mu'tazilitischer Kalām aus dem 10. Jahrhundert*; Steinschneider's articles on Byzantine Hebrew manuscripts and books in *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen* and in *Catalogue Leiden*; Schreiner's *Studien über Jeschuah ben Jehudah*; Markon in his introduction to the Hebrew version of a Commentary on the Book of Ruth, *Livre d'hommage a la mémoire du Samuel Poznański*, Hebrew Section (see below, note 105); Pinsker and Fürst, on occasions, in their books on Karaism; Poznański in various articles in which he published fragments of Byzantine texts; F. Perles, "Jüdisch-byzantinische Beziehungen," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, II (1893), 569 ff.; Neubauer in his fragment of *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Isaiah, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, I, 59 ff.; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Palestine*, 55 f. Cf. also Neubauer's general evaluation, in his review of Fürst's *Graeco-Hebrew Glossarium*, *JQR* (O.S.), IV (1891-92), 18.

⁹⁵ Cf. Starr, "A Fragment of a Greek Mishnaic Glossary," *PAAJR*, VI (1935), 355. Note also Frankl's emphasis on the *direct* indebtedness of the Karaites to Greek literature as against Steinschneider's theory of intermediary Arabic channels, *Hash-shaḥar*, VIII (1877), 177 f. It is difficult in the present state of research to demonstrate whether the Karaites knew the original classics of Greek philosophy or used some of the scholia produced in their own time.

The Karaites of the eleventh century made a conscious effort to adopt the language of the great and proud empire to which their fathers had immigrated in the not far-off past, and to make it their own. That century witnessed, as is well known, a revival of classical studies and the use of classical Greek in Byzantium. It seems quite natural, then, that the second- and third-generation Karaites of Constantinople should reveal precisely the spirit of classical revival with which the period of a Psellos, Leichudes and Xiphilinos was imbued.⁹⁶ Their exclusively urban character, also, rendered them, as already noted, more susceptible and more exposed to the hellenizing effect of the neo-classicist trend.⁹⁷

POPULAR LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION

Nevertheless, revealing as they are, the atticisms of the philosophical glosses in the works of a Tobias ben Moses or Yehūdah Hadassī tell only one side of the story of Karaite linguistic integration in Byzantium. The other side—that of daily usage and of the gradual emergence of a Graeco-Karaite jargon—has barely been touched upon by researchers. And yet, the preliminary spadework that has been done in regard to a much later period (17th century) has shown that the inherently conservative forces, governing the linguistic phenomena of diasporic Jewries, have been at work also in the Karaite community.⁹⁸ Here, indeed, is a rich field for research, one that would not only shed light on Byzantine Karaism alone but undoubtedly prove helpful to Byzantine studies in general.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ On the classical revival in the period under review, see the summary by Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization*, 233 f.; J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire*, esp. 37 ff.; Iorga, *Histoire de la vie byzantine*, II, 92 ff. On the vogue of classical Greek among the intelligentsia of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see Runciman, *op. cit.*, 240 f. On Psellos cf. Neumann, *Weltstellung des byz. Reiches*, 81 ff.; A. N. Rambaud, *Etudes sur l'histoire byzantine*, 111 ff.; Diehl, *Figures byzantines*, I, 291 ff.; Bury, "Roman Emperors," in *Selected Essays*, 186 ff.; Hussey, *op. cit.*, esp. 73 ff.; R. M. Dawkins, "The Greek Language in the Byzantine Period," in Baynes-Moss' *Byzantium*, 256 f.; Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine*, 328 f. On the literature of the period see K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, and F. Dölger's general observations in *Die byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache*, 7 ff. Cf. also Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byz. Staates*, 261 f.

⁹⁷ Cf. above, 182, note 54.

⁹⁸ Cf. A. Danon, *Meirath 'Enatm du Caraïte Elie Afèda Beghi* [= *Journal Asiatique*, 11th Series, IV, 5 ff.]; and earlier, "Notice sur la littérature gréco-caraïte," *REJ*, LXIV (1912), 147 ff.

⁹⁹ On the continuous process of development of conversational *κοινή*, paralleling the scholarly efforts of the classicist-minded savants, cf. Dawkins' aforementioned essay in *Byzantium*, esp. 258 ff. Dawkins stresses the fact (p. 262) that the two lines of development, the classical and the popular, have existed side by side. See also Bréhier, *La civilisation byzantine*, 325 ff.

Characteristically, the universal adoption of the Judeo-Español by Turkish Rabbanites, in the wake of the influx of Spanish refugees after 1492, did not affect the Karaites of Turkey, notwithstanding the special respect which they reserved for the Sephardi Jews and their culture.¹⁰⁰ The contrary rather seems true: Precisely the *halakhic* rapprochement between Karaites and Rabbanites of the period endowed the preservation of the Karaite *linguistic* heritage with special significance. The Karaites of the former Byzantine provinces were always on the receiving end of the interdenominational alliance, studying as they did at the feet of Rabbanite masters. No wonder they fell back on the half-a-millennium old Graeco-Karaite jargon as an anchor of their sectarian identity. When as late as the 1830's the Russian Karaite leader, Abraham Firkowicz, attempted to introduce the Karaimic-Turkic dialect, spoken by the sectaries of Russia, in place of the Greek jargon which was still prevalent in the Bible classes of the Karaite community in Istanbul, the furor of the local Karaites knew no bounds.¹⁰¹ A hundred years later the use of Greek could still be reported from the little Karaite quarter of Haskeuy, Istanbul.¹⁰²

This extraordinary persistence had its roots in the period covered by the present chapter. Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher*—a compilation of excerpts from Hebrew Karaite commentaries that were circulating in Byzantium—brings us, through the abundant Greek glosses it contains, right into the very process of Karaite grecization that was then in progress.

JACOB BEN REUBEN

The date of *Sefer ha-'Osher* is still debatable.¹⁰³ At any rate, whether its author lived in the eleventh century or some fifty years later, both

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Elijah Bashyachi's *Addereth Eliyyahū*, passim. Elijah shows not only preference for the classical Spanish Hebrew literature, the Sephardic cantillation, and the principles of biblical exegesis as practiced by the Jewish commentators of Spain, but also for the Sephardic Jews of his own time. He is, however, quite outspoken in his dislike of Ashkenazic Jewry on account of its garlic diet, noisy display of piety and "frightening" attire. Cf. my comments and quotation in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 185, and in my article on Bashyachi, *Ensiĳlopedyah 'Ivrith*, IX, 961. On Kaleb Afendopolo's close contacts with Spanish refugees from whom he acquired a Torah scroll, see the excerpts from *Pathshegen Kethab had-Dath*, published by Danon in *JQR* (N. S.), XVII (1926-27), 172-73. See also above, 152.

¹⁰¹ See D. Blondheim, "Echos du judéo-hellenism," *REJ*, LXXVIII (1924), 6.

¹⁰² Cf. Danon, "Notice sur la littérature gréco-karaïte," *REJ*, LXIV (1912), 147. Cf. further the testimony of Rosanes, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael be-Thōgarmah*, I, 206, 216.

¹⁰³ In his article in *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 41, Poznański at first placed Jacob ben Reuben in the eleventh century; later (*Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, 67), he

the Hebrew translations underlying the compilation and the Greek glosses appended thereto belong undoubtedly to the eleventh century.

Jacob's original contribution to the content of his book was rather limited. The differences of style and the contradictions in content that are easily visible to one familiar with the whole manuscript, show that Jacob did not translate the old Arabic commentaries himself.¹⁰⁴ Nor, for that matter, was he responsible for the Greek glosses in his text (except perhaps for corrupting their spelling). The fact that some sections of his commentary, such as those on Genesis, Exodus or Leviticus, abound in Greek glosses, while other sections, which are no less difficult, e.g., Numbers and Deuteronomy, contain none, proves it beyond doubt. Jacob merely abridged (not always very thoughtfully) and arranged (not always very intelligently) those comments which he found already rendered into Hebrew and provided with Greek glosses by earlier translators.¹⁰⁵

Thus, as an actual commentary, i.e., as a manual of annotations to the language and content of the scriptural text, *Sefer ha-'Osher* is, by all medieval and modern standards, practically worthless. Yet, as a guide to the library of the early Byzantine Karaite and to his linguistic equipment, both Hebrew and Greek, it is perhaps the most revealing of all

assigned him to the first half of the twelfth century. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 243, seems to have been unaware of this change in Poznański's opinion.

¹⁰⁴ This was already noticed by L. Marwick, *JBL*, LXII (1943), 39. For an illustration see above, 71 f. Cf. also below, Chapter VIII.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, 71 ff., and 77, note 48. An interesting insight into the technique of Jacob ben Reuben can be gained through textual comparison of three sources—luckily, all three of them printed. One is the full Hebrew translation of Yefeth ben 'Ali's *Commentary on the Book of Ruth*. This Hebrew text was published by I. Markon in the Hebrew Part of *Livre d'hommage a la mémoire du Samuel Poznański*, 78 ff. Markon wrongly attributed the work to Salman ben Yerūḥam; Yefeth's authorship is beyond doubt. Cf. Marwick's review-article in *JBL*, LXII (1943), 38 f., and his "Studies" in *JQR* (N.S.), XXXIV (1943–44), 317, n. 15. The same conclusion was reached independently by L. Nemoy when answering the question, "Did Salman ben Yerūḥam Compose a Commentary on Ruth?" in *JQR* (N.S.), XXXIX (1948), 215 f. The other source is the Arabic original of Yefeth's commentary. The first two chapters thereof were edited by N. Schornstein, *Der Commentar des Karäers Jepheth ben 'Ali zum Buche Rûth*, and translated by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 84 ff. The third source is Jacob ben Reuben's Commentary on Ruth in his *Sefer ha-'Osher*. This text is nothing else but an abridgment of the aforementioned full Hebrew text, which, in turn, was a translation of Yefeth's Arabic Commentary on the Book of Ruth.

Thus, a unique opportunity is given in this case to sample Jacob's *criteria of selection* from a larger source available to him. Our case is limited, however, by the fact that *only one* translated source was available to Jacob in preparation of his brief Commentary on the Book of Ruth. For the time being there is no way of checking the *criteria of synthesis and arrangement* which governed his editing technique in cases in which more than one Hebrew translation or compilation were at his disposal.

contemporaneous Byzantine Karaite creations. It constitutes the sum total of eleventh-century exegetical knowledge in Karaism, so far as transmitted to Byzantium from the East, in addition to being in its own right a milestone in the cultural endeavor of the sect in its Byzantine environment. As such, it constitutes a veritable mine of information which the student of Byzantine Karaite history cannot afford to neglect; indeed, with regard to certain aspects of that history it has no peer.

According to my computation, based on the study of the entire manuscript of *Sefer ha-'Osher* (now in Leiden) and of the brief section thereof that had been uncritically published a hundred and thirty years ago in Gozlow, some five hundred (!) Greek words or Graeco-Karaite colloquialisms and phrases can be yielded by this commentary. Of this number, Genesis alone contains one-fifth; next comes Exodus with some seventy words, Leviticus with sixty, Isaiah with more than thirty, the Books of Samuel and Job with twenty-five each, and so on. The words range from "bread" to various species of fish; from simple work-tools to specialized terms in building techniques, textile industry, etc.; from parts of the human body to medical names for diseases and physical defects; from different articles of wear and even armor to official designations, such as titles of Byzantine officials, measures and coinage; from courtesy phrases to theological expressions.¹⁰⁶

GREEK NAMES

In time, along with the increasing linguistic integration of the Karaites in their Greek-speaking environment, surely Greek names, too, became popular among the Karaite inhabitants of the Empire. Unfortunately, we do not possess any direct evidence to this effect for the formative years of the sect in Byzantium. No private correspondence by Byzantine Karaites—comparable, say, to the plea of the Egyptian-born immigrant Rabbanite lady, Malīḥah, whose daughter from a marriage in Byzantium bore already the Greek name *Zoé*—has up to this day been recovered.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Of course, many of these terms have been corrupted beyond recognition in the process of transliteration into Hebrew and subsequent copying. Still, a critical edition of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, which I understand is imminent, will prove a major contribution to Byzantine studies at large, if, as I hope, it will be provided with a comprehensive glossary and the necessary critical apparatus. The creation of such an apparatus calls in turn for a careful study and eventual publication of the Arabic originals of Yefeth ben 'Alī and others.

For the general story of the diffusion of Greek among Byzantine Jewry see Starr's *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, Index, s.v. "Greek Language." The present material was unknown to Starr.

¹⁰⁷ See the letter published by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimids*,

Nor do we have any Byzantine Karaite legal documents of a kind paralleling, for example, the marriage contract of the Rabbanite girl at Mastaura; her Greek name, *Eudokia*, as well as the Greek name of the father of one of the signatories, had to be transliterated into Hebrew for insertion in the traditional *kethubbah*.¹⁰⁸

The only onomastic material available so far from Byzantine Karaites of the period consists of names of the *Hebrew Karaite scholars* whose works have been cited all along in the present volume. These do not show as yet any signs of grecization.¹⁰⁹ The absence of such signs, however, is not striking at all; in fact, it is more or less in keeping with the situation among contemporary Byzantine *Rabbanite scholars*, too.¹¹⁰

Not before the fifteenth century can a Greek-sounding family name—*Afendopolo* or *Efendipulo*—be found among the names of Karaite scholars in Constantinople. It stands out as a noteworthy exception from

II, 306 f. (cf. also I, 241 f.), and partly reproduced in English by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 214, No. 162. The lady asked her brothers in Egypt to return her to her native land along with her daughter. She seems to have married a Byzantine Jew who either died in the meantime or divorced her. The letter is not dated, but both Mann and Starr place it in the twelfth century. Although the text breaks somewhere in the middle of its business part—when Malihah suggests to her brothers to cover their travel expenses by bringing some merchandise along with them—there is no doubt as to the Rabbanite persuasion of the correspondents; in fact, they seem to belong to a learned family. This can be inferred not only from the flowery Hebrew style of the letter but also from a direct mention of a relative who ranked high in the Rabbanite academic hierarchy ([בחוריה] אדונינו הרביעי).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. the text, dated 1022 C.E., in Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 94 ff., and Mann's comments there, I, 93 f. For an English version and comments see Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 187 ff., No. 30. The name of one of the four witnesses is Moses ben Leon. Incidentally, several of the bride's and bridegroom's gifts are listed in Greek (in Hebrew transliteration). Th. Reinach added to the elucidation of these objects in "Un contrat de mariage du temps de Basile le Bulgaroctone," *Mélanges Schlumberger*, I, 118 ff. The general form and the Aramaic language of the document which are in line with the standard *kethubboth* of the period, confirm the Rabbanite allegiance of the parties involved.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., Tobias ben Moses, Jacob ben Simon, Jacob ben Reuben, Yehudah Hadassi, Elijah ben Abraham.

¹¹⁰ Cf. the names of the Rabbanite scholars in Starr's presentation of Byzantine Jewish intellectual activity prior to 1204, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 59 ff. Cf. further the names of community leaders in the different Byzantine localities visited by Benjamin of Tudela. A brief check will reveal that no more than 5 percent of the personages listed by the traveler bore Greek names; there is, however, some doubt as to their *scholarly* standing. On the other hand, there is no certainty that the Hebrew grammarian, Kaleb, surnamed *Korsinos* and quoted by the fourteenth-century Mosconi, was actually a contemporary of Abishai of Zagora, a Bulgarian Rabbanite scholar who is reported by the same Mosconi (in an earlier passage) to have composed a supercommentary on Ibn Ezra in 1170; chances are that *Korsinos* belongs to the thirteenth century. See on him Starr, *op. cit.*, 64, and 236, No. 183.

the growing number of Turkicized names assumed by Karaites living in the former Byzantine territories of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹¹ This later phenomenon, however, cannot be gone into at this juncture.¹¹²

Whatever the case, it is obvious that responsible leaders were aware of the danger of excessive linguistic integration in the formative period of Karaite settlement in Byzantium. Consequently, the cultivation of Hebrew, in spite of its initial clumsiness and undeveloped scientific vocabulary, was surely looked upon by them as a praiseworthy countercheck to the assimilating forces at play. Indeed, it is possible that this attitude may have prompted the twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite Yehūdāh Hadassī to include the personal obligation of the study of Hebrew among the Ten Articles of Faith which he was the first to formulate.¹¹³

CHANGING HORIZONS

We have now reached the middle of the eleventh century, when an already well-established and economically prosperous third-generation Karaite society in Byzantium was about to attain maturity. This maturation was manifest, as we have seen, in the development of an in-

¹¹¹ Carmoly's rendering "Efendipulo" (*Israelitische Annalen*, ed. Jost, I [1839], 397), accepted by Fürst (*Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 311, and note 201) and by Neubauer (*Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 61), is rejected by Steinschneider (*Gesammelte Schriften*, I, 182, note 2). The reading "Afendopolo," although unexplained, is prevalent in the later treatments. Galanté (*Cinquième recueil de documents concernant les Juifs de Turquie*, 50) mentions, along with "Afendopolo," also the Greek Karaite name *Kalonyanos*. He gives, however, no details as to the activity of the family bearing that name. No *Kalonyanos* is known to me among the Karaite *scholars* of Byzantium or Turkey. On the occurrence of Turkicized family names among Karaites see briefly above, 58 f.

¹¹² I propose to deal with it in my projected "History of the Karaites in Turkey, Russia and Poland."

¹¹³ Cf. the Sixth Article in Hadassī's Creed, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 21c-d, Alphabet 53: עניין אשר ששי זו היא: להשכיל לשונה [=של התורה] מה היא: ובניינה ופתרונה ומסלולה איך היא: וקריאתה והגיונה ונגונה ונקודה בשהיא: ומליצת נקודה לעבר ולעתיד ומצדד [مصدد] ושם וצויו ופעל קל ופעל כבד על מה היא: ופעל עומד ומוכרת וסמוך ועשוי ומופעל ונפעל ודומיהן מה היא ואיך היא: אז יבין לשון אלהינו כאשר היא: עדות ה' נאמנה מחכימת פתי (תהל' י"ט, ח): כי אז אהפך על עמי' שפה ברורה לקרא כלם בשם ה' (צפני' ג', ט) אלהיך.

The now binding briefer definition of this Article and the commentary thereon by the fifteenth-century "last codifier" of Karaism, Elijah Bashyachi (*Addeṛeth Eliyyahū*, 80d ff.), are given in partial English translation by Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 250 ff. The Karaites took great pride in the fact that Hadassī's Articles of Faith preceded the formulation of the Rabbanite Creed by Maimonides. Incidentally, among the Thirteen Articles of the Rabbanites no similar demand is made to master the Hebrew language and grammar as a matter of religious obligation.

telligent and far-sighted national leadership under the guidance of Tobias ben Moses. In the eventful period which was now initiated, institutional forms were molded and an unprecedented activity was set in motion, aimed at transferring the Karaite literary treasures of Palestine to Byzantium. Policies were now laid down which proved to be of far-reaching consequence for the future of the sect.¹¹⁴

Thus, the middle of the eleventh century marked for Byzantine Karaism both an end and a beginning. It was the end, or rather the consummation, of a twin process which had already begun more than half a century earlier. Of one of its aspects we have spoken in detail: it was the geo-demographic shift of Jewish communal and economic endeavor, brought about by the political and territorial transformations that shook the Near East in the latter half of the tenth century. This development continued and became more pronounced in the eleventh century with the further decline of the major Jewish centers in the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. It was to that general upheaval in the East, which had so radically affected the Jewish people at large, that Karaite settlements owed their very existence on Byzantine soil. Thus we can readily understand the intimate dependence and attachment of the Byzantine Karaites to their co-religionists on the Islamic side of the international fence. We must recognize these ties as a factor of paramount importance in the formative stages of Karaism in Byzantium.¹¹⁵

We shall now consider the second aspect of the process which dominated the early years of the sect in the Empire. The ascendancy of the Italian maritime republics which began in the latter half of the tenth century, and the resurgence of Muslim piracy in the East-Mediterranean waters some decades later, steadily narrowed such avenues of international trade which had hitherto been open to the Jews. The consequent involuntary contraction of Jewish commercial enterprise into the boundaries of a local or, at best, regional market,

¹¹⁴ An illuminating contrast between the Byzantine Karaites and Rabbanites with regard to their respective sources of creative inspiration was thought by Starr to be apparent in the biblical commentaries produced in the Empire. The indebtedness of the Karaite commentators in Byzantium to their Palestinian mentors, often bordering on what to the modern reader would smack of plagiarism, has already been sufficiently emphasized; see also Chapter VIII. Contrariwise, the Rabbanite authors in the Empire seem to have been affected very little, if at all, by the teaching emanating from Palestine or Mesopotamia. Starr maintained (*Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 50 ff.), that "we find them using instead, for the most part, the works of several famous western scholars." Cf. there, 64. This last assertion still awaits documentation.

¹¹⁵ Cf. above, 110 ff.

proved—in Byzantium perhaps more than in any Near-Eastern Islamic country—a mighty propelling force for the rise of an indigenous, regional-minded Karaite leadership.

This steadily shrinking horizon of Byzantine Jewish economy has to be viewed also in the context of the interdependent communal situation in Jewry at large: The once-powerful central agencies of Jewish self-government in the old Islamic world were disintegrating; Rabbanite local or regional authorities were emerging everywhere. The era of progressive decentralization of Jewry—a corollary of the disintegration of the Eastern Caliphate—and the rise of provincial Jewish leadership, in the wake of regional needs and self-determination, had set in.¹¹⁶ These communal and economic developments further stimulated the sense of self-awareness and the profound inner transformation that had taken hold of the third generation of Karaites in the Empire.

The grandsons of the Arabic-speaking newcomers to Christian Byzantium now became increasingly sensitive to their regional needs and interests. This country was now theirs by birthright. They felt they were well integrated in it both linguistically and culturally. Adherents of a sect that was a characteristic product of an Islamic environment,¹¹⁷ they could not avoid coming to grips with a situation which was as alarming as it was natural: their native Greek was steadily pushing the traditional Arabicized models of Karaite literature and thought out of their daily life. True, these native Karaite Byzantines remained genuinely and unswervingly loyal to their religio-spiritual ideal embodied in the living example of the Arabic-speaking “Mourners of Zion” in Jerusalem: they humbly accepted the latter’s tutelage in matters of law and sent their sons to Palestine to sit at the feet of the saintly masters. They further maintained close commercial ties with their Egyptian brethren. Still, they felt disturbed and embarrassed by those external elements of their heritage which now seemed politically and culturally alien to the environment they regarded as their own.

It was not an insoluble dilemma, to be sure. The alien elements—this the Byzantine Karaites knew clearly—were not inherent in the basic tenets of their creed; they only lingered on through inertia, incompatible with the social and intellectual climate of the Christian State which

¹¹⁶ Cf. the paragraph on “Progressive Decentralization” in S. W. Baron’s *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), V, 38 ff., as well as the paragraphs “Provincial Leadership” and “Progressive Self-determination” in his *The Jewish Community*, I, 187 ff. and 206 f., respectively.

¹¹⁷ See above, *Introd.*, 3, 9, 25.

was now their home. The dictate of the hour, then, was to emancipate the Byzantine branch of the movement from these alien externals, without infringing, however, on the fundamentals of Karaism's religious and social doctrine.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF MATURITY AND SELF-ASSERTION

It is in this sense that the mid-forties of the eleventh century mark also a beginning: a protracted struggle for self-assertion and a conscious effort by the local leadership to adapt the Karaites' mode of life to specifically Byzantine conditions while retaining the essentials of Karaite faith and practice.

It comes as no surprise that precisely from the ranks of students, who had lived and studied in Jerusalem and returned from there imbued with the zeal of the "Mourners of Zion," arose such leaders as Tobias ben Moses. Equipped with a thorough mastery of Karaite doctrine and exegesis, in addition to the general erudition and spirit flowing from his native Greek environment, Tobias has led his compatriots from inarticulate growth under the wings of Palestinian masters and from complacent catering to Egyptian notables into communal self-assertion and literary creativity.

In launching their flock on a path of adjustment and reorientation, the leaders of young Karaism in Byzantium surely saved the movement from inner contradictions and decay. They could not have known that in the process of adaptation and reformulation of many a principle, in order to suit the new developments, some essentials would have to be sacrificed, too. All they were doing was forging the means for survival and for preservation of identity in the new environment they called now home. They could not have foreseen that in the not far-off future tremendous external happenings would eventually sweep the movement away from Palestine, the focal point of independent Karaite creativity, and away from the socio-political and communal climate of the Islamic East which had caused originally the sect's appearance on the scene of Jewish history. Nor could they have dreamed then of the great mission which their center was consequently destined to shoulder, for centuries to come, in spreading and supporting the Karaite creed in the far provinces of Eastern Europe.

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE LAW

THE ULTIMATE nature of the Byzantine Karaite adjustments becomes increasingly manifest to the critical eye as one glances through the centuries. Unfortunately, most of Karaite literary creations possess the monotonous uniformity, so characteristic of that *genre* of literature in general, which makes it rather difficult to trace the initial changes that occurred in the sect in the early Byzantine period.

Nevertheless, on the strength of the unmistakable modifications in Karaite law a few generations later, we shall not go wrong in venturing an assumption. We may anticipate that, while clinging to essential divergences in ritual, the Karaite minority gradually absorbed certain customs and usages which were developed by its *Rabbanite* neighbors through centuries-long experience on Byzantine soil.¹ In the course of time, genuinely new Karaite practices and a characteristically new slant in the Karaite mode of thinking might have taken shape. These were a result of conditions prevailing in the country and of the ever-growing impact of linguistic and cultural integration of Karaite intelligentsia into the Empire's heterogeneous society.

LAW AND REALITY

The scantiness of actual information about the changes involved imposes on the student the obligation of appraising the character and intensity of such changes in a roundabout way. Thus, a careful application of semantic analysis to Karaite legal terminology might prove extremely useful; it might compensate for the absence of explicit acknowledgment in Karaite literature of the above-surmised absorption of new practices and customs. For, whatever their nature and degree, modifi-

¹ On the early history of the Jewish communities in the Byzantine Empire see, in general, S. Krauss, *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdischen Geschichte*. Starr's *Jews in the Byzantine Empire* begins only with the changed position of the Empire in the seventh century, i.e., after the loss of the eastern provinces to the Muslim conquerors. See also above, 113, note 97.

cations of religious usages and rules of behavior required either alterations in Karaite law proper or new approaches in legal interpretation. Old terms had to be imbued with new meanings; new terms had to be adopted where the old ones, even in their new formulation, failed to meet the realities of life. Hence, the quest for a new or modified legal terminology—reflecting, in turn, a quest for legal recognition of realities of life—may indirectly afford us an insight into the workings of the process of acclimatization assumed above.

Regrettably, Karaite legislation was never investigated in terms of historical development. The “monolithic” approach to Karaism of most modern researchers and the inherently conservative character of Karaite literature all through the ages tended to present Karaite law as a basically homogeneous and fairly stable creation.² Consequently, the eleventh- and fifteenth-century reforms (such as those modifying the laws of incest or the regulations governing the kindling of fire for use on a Sabbath) were looked upon by scholars as sporadic excesses of radical liberals, out of tune with the “true” tenor of Karaite legislative philosophy. The truth of the matter is, however, that, in addition to the evident changes in specific laws, which indeed were formally promulgated in the eleventh and fifteenth centuries respectively, a serious process of legislative revision and reformulation was already in progress from the mid-tenth century on. This process not only touched upon a number of *practical issues*, but encompassed a whole range of basic *legal concepts* and the accepted *criteria for legal deduction*. A full-scale exploration of this evolution in Karaite jurisprudence is, of course, impractical in this connection, however beckoning the task. In the present chapter only the briefest and most general sketch can be given of those legal concepts which alone are directly relevant to the Byzantine story.³

PALESTINIAN PRELUDE

To be sure, then, the trend toward adjustment and reformulation of the Karaite code of law did not begin in Byzantium. Early attempts in that di-

² On the “monolithic” approach of modern Karaitic scholarship see our Introduction, above, 7 f.

³ The full documentation of the present thesis, so far as the pre-Byzantine Karaite material goes, will have to be deferred to a separate study which I hope to publish some time in the future. On the other hand, Byzantine literature will be referred to as fully as space and consideration of form permit. The reader will easily discover for himself the points in which I am indebted to, and those on which I differ, in method and conclusion, from the earlier interpretations.

Cf., for instance, Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (4th ed.), V, Note 17, § iv, esp. 501 ff.;

rection can already be discerned in the Muslim environment of Palestine, when Karaite scholarship attained the threshold of ripeness and maturity.

True, Palestinian Karaite literature of the late tenth and the eleventh centuries is usually lumped together with that of the earlier school (late ninth and early tenth centuries) under the general heading of "The Golden Age of Karaism in Palestine." There is, however, a definite difference between these two chronological units both in quality and character. The early Karaite creativity (till the middle of the tenth century), bravely shouldering the burden of repelling the Saadyan and post-Saadyan assault, concentrated mainly on polemics and apologetics. Even the works it produced in the field of biblical exegesis, Hebrew linguistics, etc., are heavily overlaid with political excursions which, while interesting to the historian, can hardly be counted among the durable gains of Judaic scholarship. Composed by a somewhat narrow-minded, if vocal, circle of fighters (of whom the oft-quoted Salman ben Yerūham is best represented in the extant sources), these works were soon superseded by the more mature compositions forming what I would call the "Later Golden Age" in the literary story of Karaism. The later compositions, indeed, while not devoid of polemics and of the familiar zest for reading into the Bible allusions to political happenings of the period, constitute a lasting and positive contribution to Jewish learning of all times.

The Later Golden Age is mirrored in the scholarly endeavor of Joseph ben Noah who in the late tenth century admittedly founded a Karaite college of seventy scholars in Jerusalem. His disciples, active in eleventh-century Palestine, have carved for the Jerusalem Karaite academy a permanent place in the cultural history of Jewry as a whole.⁴ Even Rabbanite authorities of the time were quite conscious

Weiss, *Dōr Dōr we-Dōrshaw*, IV, esp. 77 f.; Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, Introduction, as well as in several other of his studies cited elsewhere in the present volume; Poznański, esp. "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 179 ff.; or the modern treatments, notably Mahler's *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, esp. 133 ff.; Ben-Sasson's critique of the latter in *Zion*, XV (1950), 42 ff.; Nemoj's *Karaite Anthology*, Introduction, and his earlier essays; and, most recently, Baron's chapter on the "Karaite Schism," in his revised *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 209 ff. (and notes).

⁴ Cf. "Ibn al-Hitī's Chronicle of Karaite Doctors" (ed. Margoliouth), *JQR* (O.S.), IX (1897), 433 and 439; Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology*, 232. See also, most recently, my remarks in *JJS*, VIII (1957), 73, and the bibliographical data above, 185, note 64.

Somewhere on the borderline between the two periods we find David ben Abraham al-Fāsi, the lexicographer. His Dictionary, while undoubtedly studied in the Jerusalem Karaite academy and twice abridged in the eleventh century, enjoyed merely a short-lived popularity. Similar to the works of the Early Golden Age, it exerted a limited influence only and was soon superseded by compositions of the later period. Cf. Skoss, *Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz of David b. Abraham al-Fāsi*, I, Intro., xxxiii ff.

of the undeniable ripeness and high caliber of Karaite scholarship from the latter half of the tenth century on.⁵ Represented by such masters as Yefeth ben 'Ali, exegete, his son Levi, legist, Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, polemicist and jurist, Abū'l-Faraj Harūn, grammarian, Joseph al-Baṣīr, philosopher and lawmaker, and the versatile disciple of the two teachers mentioned last, Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, Karaite learning made its impact be felt not only in Byzantium but as far as Spain.⁶ Hence, when discussing the Byzantine phase of Karaite history, the different quality of the second period within the Golden Age framework must not be lost sight of, since Byzantine Karaite scholarship was a direct offshoot of the *Later* Golden Age of the sect in Palestine.

Now, it is beyond the scope of the present study to enumerate all the symptoms of maturity manifested by the Golden Age Karaite literature in the second stage of its development.⁷ Be it stressed only that this maturity was by no means limited to purely academic matter. In that later stage, the Palestinian Karaite lawmakers began also coping realistically with the new conditions and challenges of their time and pulled down many a wall that had been erected by earlier ideologists of the movement.⁸ Still, the fact that no other than a *Byzantine* disciple

⁵ Cf. the source quoted above, 185, beginning of note 64. Cf. also my brief sketch on "Ben Zūṭā," a member of the same circle of scholars, in *Enṣiklopedyah 'Ivrith* (Enc. Hebraica), IX, 101 f.

⁶ On Palestinian Karaite echoes in the exegesis of the twelfth-century Rabbanite Spaniard Abraham ibn Ezra, cf. my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 60 ff., 194 ff. On Abraham ibn Daūd's literary struggle in Spain against the influence of Yeshū'ah's books, see his own statement in *Seder haq-Ḳabbalah, Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 81. See further my remarks in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 186 ff., and above, 34 f. (and notes).

⁷ As one illustration of these symptoms of maturity we may cite the positive stand of the spokesmen of that period on the question of introducing the teaching of philosophy into the Karaite curriculum. This development comes into sharper relief when appraised against the background of the heated opposition to the study of philosophy voiced earlier by an al-Ḳūmisī or a Salman. The acceptance of philosophy as a legitimate subject-matter in the Karaite program of instruction was coupled with the actual rise of philosophical writings in the sectarian academy of Jerusalem, reaching full blossom in the eleventh century under Joseph al-Baṣīr and Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah.

This stands in no contradiction to the fact that we already have in the *early* tenth century a great Karaite thinker and erudite, Jacob al-Ḳirkisānī, who was well versed in the philosophic discipline of his time. Ḳirkisānī, a *non-Palestinian*, a characteristic product of the symbiotic cultural climate of Upper Mesopotamia in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, constitutes in this respect a separate phenomenon and should by no means be counted with the Palestinian Early Golden Age. Invaluable as he is to the historian today, he wielded little influence on the philosophic outlook of his successors.

⁸ The realistic approach of the Jerusalem Karaite school at the time under discussion can be gauged, for instance, from the position of that school on the *rikkūb*

of the Jerusalem masters did affix the final seal to that trend, by giving it its definitive legal formulation, is not without significance. In so doing, the eleventh-century Karaite lawmaker in the Empire had founded, in a sense, a new school of legal thought in Karaism, foreshadowing the great innovations of Elijah Bashyachi in the fifteenth century.

This new direction in the philosophy of sectarian Jewish law merits therefore a fuller elaboration.

“CONSENSUS OF COMMUNITY”

Unwritten laws of local practice and custom, deriving their sanction from the sheer weight of common observance by certain groups or regions, attained from the very outset legitimate standing in sectarian Jewish jurisprudence. A counterpart of *al-ijmā'*, i.e., “consensus of the community” in Muslim law, this phenomenon became known later in the Karaite legal jargon as *qibbūš* or *'edah*.⁹ Chances are that *'edah* may perhaps be echoing the Arabic legal term *'āda*, i.e., the “unwritten body of local customs” (*usus*; *Gewohnheitsrecht*); affinity of sound may have enhanced here the substantial kinship of connotation between the two terms.¹⁰

Whatever the case, communal agreement must have been, to a degree greater than we suspect, instrumental in lending shape to Jewish sectarianism. After all, even such commonplace instances as the minutiae of law governing ritual slaughter of animals, details of the order of

problem, as cited above, 81 ff. Also the reply sent from Jerusalem to a Byzantine query on the subject of calendar doubts (to be discussed in Chapter VII of the present study) shows a degree of realism unthinkable a hundred years earlier, when ascetic zealots of the type of Salman ben Yerūham reigned supreme.

⁹ On the Muslim principle of *ijmā'* see I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islām*, 53 ff.; Th. W. Juynboll, *Handbuch des islamischen Gesetzes*, 46 ff., and his masterly sketch in *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 858b ff., esp. 862b; J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*, esp. 2, 42 f., 82 ff.; G. E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islām* (2nd ed.), 149 ff.; M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islām*, 31 ff.

¹⁰ This was suggested to me by Professor A. Jeffery of Columbia University who, upon reading the manuscript of the present study, graciously permitted the inclusion of this point in the text. *'Āda* or *'urf* (i. e., “what is commonly known as being the custom”) “have generally been the produce of long-standing convention, either deliberately adopted or the result of unconscious adaptation to circumstances, and they have therefore been followed where practical considerations have been uppermost,” writes R. Levy in *The Social Structure of Islām*, 248. Quoting Goldziher's *Die Zāhīriten*, Levy emphasizes the fact that while “the customary laws have generally gone unrecorded by the legists, they have not gone unrecognized,” and “where local influences have been strong, local custom has frequently been held to be decisive.”

On the persistence of local practices in the fringe areas of Jewish Dispersion, which were more than other regions addicted to sectarianism, see our Introduction, above, 5, 16 f.

prayer, and the characteristically Karaite insistence on lunar observation as the determinant of *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* (the first day of the month) could only be inferred from the Scripture by an unusual stretch of imagination and by most precarious dialectics. These and similar precepts, as candidly admitted by a fifteenth-century Karaite codifier, were actually such as we have *grown used* to following, since the time of our fathers and their ancestors, and which we have made our *regular custom* to observe, although they were not prescribed by the Scriptures. Indeed, they have become [second] nature to us.¹¹

In other words, these *deviationist usages and observances were the practical expression of a general consensus of opinion in areas in which their adherents lived in compact groups and which had been only slightly affected by the normative geonic legislation*. To them the practices based on 'edah or *ḳibbūṣ* were no less valid than precepts clearly formulated by the biblical Lawmaker.

The intellectualist trend of *ijtihād* or *ḥippūs*, which gained the upper hand in the sectarian camp with the rise of Karaism, could not but desiccate the 'edah principle of its inherent, self-revitalizing capacity. Hard on the heels of talmudic hermeneutics, Karaism refused to lag behind the central Rabbanite authorities in the halakhic formulation of Judaism. Consequently, it engaged in the fortification of its own mode of life on legalistic, scholarly foundations. Karaite savants seized upon a forced biblical exegesis as a rationale for those regional divergences which had been originally discarded by Babylonian talmudic legislation; these divergences, as already noted, vigorously persisted on the margins of the far-flung Diaspora—the breeding-places of Jewish dissent—on the strength of communal consensus.

"SEARCH YE WELL IN THE SCRIPTURE"

Beginning with 'Anan ben David, Karaite exegetes and legists read the particular rites and modes of behavior of their sect into the text of the Scriptures by strained dialectical devices, largely borrowed from talmudic and Muslim literature. They even went so far as to stretch the authorized scriptural foundation for hermeneutical deductions; while Rabbanite hermeneutics was limited to the Five Books of Moses, the Karaites ranged over the twenty-four volumes of the entire Bible.

Thus, "pure biblicism" or "fundamentalism" cannot be applied in their true sense to the Karaite movement. Terms of this kind would lead us to believe that the Karaites were content to discard such practices

¹¹ See below, 231, note 51, our quotation from Bashyachi's *Addereth Eliyyahū*.

as are not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. The Karaite Books of Precepts (*Sifrē Mišwoth*), however, moved in an opposite direction. Taking *the established sectarian custom* as a point of departure, they endeavored to muster for it the maximum of biblical support by extending the traditional hermeneutical devices to the limit of their pliability. This, in fact, is the gist of the well-known Karaite maxim, *ḥapīsū be-ōraythā shappīr* ("Search ye well in the Scripture"), which very probably stems from 'Anan himself.

The 'Ananite doctrine did not reach, however, the eleventh-century builders and ideologists of the movement in Byzantium in its pristine garb. Channeled through a ninth- and tenth-century Palestinian-inspired interpretation, the dicta that claimed the Founding Fathers of the sect for their authors gathered on their way several elements of legal and social thought which were far removed from the original ideas of the early leaders. Even the text of 'Anan's defiant rallying-cry to Scripture Searchers—the just-quoted *ḥapīsū be-ōraythā shappīr*—was probably available to the Byzantine Karaite students, as it is available to us today, only as a quotation in a late tenth-century Palestinian composition.¹²

Indeed, the accuracy and even the very authenticity of the extant version of 'Anan's slogan had long been subject to doubt. Particularly the second clause of the statement, *we-'al tisha'anū 'al da'ti* ("And do not rely on my opinion"), caused serious difficulty on account of its *Hebrew* wording. Such wording contrasted with both the *Aramaic* formulation of the first clause and the use of *Aramaic* in general in 'Anan's *Book of Precepts*.¹³

The reservations of the sceptics, whether because of linguistic or other difficulties, are well-founded. Still, a mere dismissal of the Hebrew part of the statement as apocryphal fails to do justice to the *later* Karaite

¹² For the context of the 'Ananite maxim cf. Yefeth ben 'Ali's Commentary on the Book of Zechariah (with reference to Zech. 5:8), as quoted by Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 184. Even Yefeth himself may not have seen a complete copy of 'Anan's code. Cf. Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 193. See there also, 132, 139.

¹³ Of the most recent studies on the subject, Mahler (*Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 134, note 32) does not credit the phrase with *literal* accuracy. It follows, however, from his general evaluation of 'Anan's doctrine that he has no doubt as to the authenticity of its *content*. On the other hand, Nemoy considers the phraseology of the *whole* dictum "certainly such as 'Anan would have used." Cf. his "Anan ben David—A Reappraisal of the Historical Data," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw*, 241, note 17. Cf. further Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), V, 212 f. and 389 f. (note 4), comparing 'Anan's injunction with that of Rabbanite authorities and with the attitude of the Muslim jurist ash-Shāfi'ī.

author, whoever he was, who coined the additional Hebrew clause and attributed it to 'Anan; surely he must have done so with good purpose.

“DO NOT RELY ON MY OPINION”

It seems reasonable to assume that the Hebrew-formulated injunction originated some time in the ninth (or early tenth) century, when Karaism used Hebrew as the vehicle of its literary creativity. On the other hand, however, it is hardly conceivable that the purpose of the late originator of the Hebrew phrase was in all earnestness to present 'Anan as the broad-minded protagonist of rationalism and individualism, the way the literal meaning of that phrase would suggest. Nothing we know of 'Anan points to his being either broad-minded or a rationalist or a scholar encouraging individual interpretation of the Law. Since Palestinian Karaism in the late ninth and early tenth centuries was openly critical of 'Anan and his close followers, the 'Ananites, a serious attribution to 'Anan, at that juncture, of a liberal call for rationalistic individualism in Bible studies would seem strange indeed.

It is therefore more likely that the Hebrew clause, “And do not rely on my opinion,” was devised to *caution against the idea of infallibility* that might possibly attach to 'Anan's interpretation of the Law. In fact, the wording may have been at first a parodical *anti-'Ananite* missile, a gibe, pure and simple, appended by 'Anan's *opponents* to his genuine dictum: a sort of “warning” of 'Anan against himself. This quip may have possibly originated in the late ninth-century Hebrew Karaite school of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī who made no secret of his aversion to 'Anan and his method. Indeed, in a Commentary on the Book of Daniel, al-Ḳūmisī (or one of his circle) went so far as to question 'Anan's very belonging to the class of intellectuals, and outrightly enjoined his coreligionists “not to take lesson from his sayings.”¹⁴ This brings to mind another of al-Ḳūmisī's famous puns against 'Anan, reported by Ḳirḳisānī, in which by a clever “emendation” of letters he presented 'Anan, the erstwhile “Prince of Intellectuals” (*Rōsh ham-Maskīlim*), as “Prince of the Fools” (*Rōsh hak-Kesīlim*).¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf. Mann's “Early Karaite Bible Commentaries,” in *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921–22), esp. 519; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 39. Commenting on Dan. 11:36 (ומן המשכילים יבטלו), the author declares: כי וברור הזה נודע ממי יי על ידי המלאך לדניאל כי משכילי גלות הרישנים (*sic!*) נבטלו במצות. ועתה אם תאמר כי ענן היה מן המשכילים הלא זה (*sic!*) מן המשכילים הנבטלים בי זה רישון. ואם תאמר לא משכיל היה אין לך ללמוד מדבריו והאחרנים (*sic!*) ימצאו אמת.

¹⁵ *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāḳib* (ed. Nemoy), I, 5; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, in “Al-

It was not until the trend toward consolidation had set in about the mid-tenth century that the abusive twist of the spurious motto attributed to 'Anan lost its parodical edge. The pronouncement in question, the content of which was by now well in line with the individualistic tendency prevalent among the Karaites all over, began to be taken at face value and regarded as a genuinely positive statement by the Father of the sect. *It advocated what tenth-century Karaism considered a foundation-stone of the movement: extreme individualism in the exposition of the Law.* It was, indeed, in this vein that the slogan was invoked by Yefeth ben 'Ali, the most individualistically minded and most original exegete of the Later Golden Age, in his Commentary on Zechariah (where the motto appears for the first time), and it was from Yefeth that the pseudo-'Ananite doctrine entered also the *Weltanschauung* of Tobias ben Moses and of other Byzantine Karaite authorities.¹⁶

BENJAMIN AN-NAHAWENDI

To be sure, 'Anan was not the only Karaite lawmaker of the older school to whom later Karaite rationalists of the Yefeth circle attributed encouragement of individualistic exegesis so that they might lend a stamp of relative antiquity and respectability to the tenth-century situation. The other Founding Father of the sect, the early ninth-century Benjamin an-Nahāwendī, was also called in to serve the same purpose. The contentious presentation of Benjamin by the Later Golden Age spokesmen as champion of individualism was accepted by modern scholarship

Qırqisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," *HUCA*, VII (1930), 321, and in *Karaite Anthology*, 330, note III/1.

The fact that Qırqisānī in 937 C.E. had no part in quoting the slogan now under discussion—neither its Aramaic clause alone nor the Hebrew appendage to it—is no proof that he was unaware of its existence. Rather, in line with our reconstruction, realizing the anti-'Ananite bias of al-Ḳūmisī and kindred critics (whom he listed as a *separate* school of dissenters!), he deliberately refrained from reporting it. Suffice it (so he thought) to reproduce just one single sample of the catchy gibes which the al-Ḳūmisī school used to launch against 'Anan; he branded that gibe shameful, to be sure. It will have served no good purpose (he reasoned further), indeed it would be unbecoming a scholar, to also repeat another of the opposition's contemptuous wisecracks. For this one, in particular, bore all the earmarks of a scurrilous apocryphon which brazenly put into the mouth of the founder of the movement a disparaging comment about himself.

¹⁶ Cf. above, 210, note 12. Cf. also the passage from Yefeth's Commentary on Deuteronomy, quoted by Poznański in the same connection. For Tobias' indebtedness to Yefeth ben 'Ali see our quotation from his *Oṣar Nehmad*, below, 258, note 23. In his colophon (Chapter VIII, note 171) Tobias, too, enjoins his readers "not to rely on his sayings."

as faithfully mirroring the legalistic creed of the veteran judge of Nahāwend. In reality, however, there is nothing in the writings of Benjamin that could be construed as recognition of the individual's right to independent interpretation of the Scripture.

Again, the crucial phrase, usually quoted in behalf of that scholar, does not appear in the extant version of his *Book of Laws*.¹⁷ That phrase is only known from the aforementioned Commentary of Yefeth ben 'Ali—the self-same exegete who was the first to invoke the allegedly 'Ananite dictum, too. Indeed, Benjamin's supposed opinion was offered there in conjunction with the slogan attributed to 'Anan.¹⁸

Now, it has been established already by modern researchers that the passage in question, as quoted by Yefeth, was not a literal quotation from Benjamin's writings but a statement by Yefeth himself, interpreting Benjamin's general philosophy of law.¹⁹ It is my contention, however, that Yefeth's comments do not reflect the views of Benjamin at all. Surely, the sentiments expressed in them in praise of scholarly independence—stressing the exemption of the son from the duty of following the legal interpretations of his father, or the freedom of a pupil to disagree with his teacher—are valid for *all* periods of Karaite activity insofar as they refer in general to Karaite rebellion *against talmudism*. They have no bearing, however, on Benjamin's opinion with regard to the right of individual formulation of laws *within the Karaite camp*, once such laws have been promulgated by competent *Karaite* authorities through proper documentation with scriptural evidence. In this respect Benjamin was no less authoritarian than the Rabbanites. His well-known views on the right—nay, duty—of corporal chastisement to be meted out by parents to their disobedient children, by husbands to wives, by teachers to pupils, by skilled craftsmen to apprentices, by masters and mistresses to slaves, and so on, hardly suggest that he encouraged the independence of sons from their *Karaite* fathers and of pupils from their *Karaite* teachers.²⁰

¹⁷ *Mas'ath Binyamin*, appended by Firkowicz to his edition of Aaron ben Joseph's *Mibhar Yesharim*, Gozlow, 1835. Several excerpts in English translation have been included in Nemoj's *Karaite Anthology*, 23 ff.

¹⁸ Poznański, *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 184; Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 176.

¹⁹ Poznański, *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 184; Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 176. Mahler (*Haq-Ḳara'im*, 214, note 32) rightly recalls the fact that Pinsker, Graetz and Dubnow have mistaken the Yefeth passage for a declaration coming from the pen of Benjamin. He considers, however, the interpretation given by Yefeth a fair statement of Benjamin's views.

²⁰ *Mas'ath Binyamin*, 2a. For the social implications that go into the above rule cf. Ben-Sasson's pertinent remarks in "The First of the Karaites" (Hebrew), *Zion*, XV (1950), 52 f., in refutation of the views expounded by Mahler.

Thus, not only the phrasing, as we have it in Yefeth's commentary, but also the very ideas of liberalism stated there do not antedate the generation of Yefeth and his Palestinian colleagues.²¹ The invocation of Benjamin's authority in connection with these ideas was obviously designed to serve the interests of a trend dominant in the tenth century and thereafter; as such it has no *historical* value so far as the reconstruction of the philosophy of the early ninth-century Benjamin is concerned. It, however, is still of importance to us in the context of Palestino-Byzantine relations within the Karaite camp, for precisely in its *unhistorical* presentation it helped molding the outlook of the Karaite leaders in Byzantium who accepted Yefeth and kindred late tenth- and eleventh-century masters as authoritative interpreters of Karaite thought.

"NEITHER A PROPHET NOR THE SON OF A PROPHET"

With no more justification can the only authentic quotation from Benjamin in Yefeth's statement be cited as proof of Benjamin's allegedly individualistic philosophy. The line in question—taken by Yefeth from "the closing section of [Benjamin's] book," though absent from our printed version—represents Benjamin as insisting on his being "neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet" (cf. Amos 7:14) but just "one of thousands and tens of thousands" of the children of Israel.

Now, there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of that declaration, since Yefeth is quite precise concerning its location in Benjamin's Code. Yet, its bearing on the problem discussed here seems rather remote. Viewed against the conditions prevalent in an-Nahāwendī's home province, that line simply comes as the Persian intellectual's answer to a belief which was still rampant in his day among his sectarian compatriots—namely, that their (pre-Karaite) leaders, an Abū 'Īsā of Iṣfahān or a Yūdghān of Hamadān, were endowed with the Divine gift of prophecy. Karaite and Muslim testimonies have shown that the 'Īsūnian movement was still unextinguished as late as the tenth century and as far as Syria. How much more so did it constitute a factor to be reckoned with a full century earlier in the Jewish community of Persia in the time of Nahāwendī.²²

²¹ Cf., for instance, the quotation from Sahl ben Maṣṣliāh, Yefeth's younger contemporary, given above, 51, note 66. Incidentally, all the textual documentation that Mahler could muster in support of his thesis about the Karaite individualistic philosophy of law belongs to the tenth century or to subsequent periods. Cf. his *Hak-Ḳara'im*, 214 ff.

²² Cf. Ḳirḳisānī's discussion of the prophetic calling claimed by Abū 'Īsā, *Kitāb*

Nevertheless, having accepted the tenor of Yefeth's late tenth-century presentation as the true embodiment of the ideology of Benjamin an-Nahāwendī, modern scholarship insisted on reading also into the epilogue of the printed edition of Benjamin's Code the same alleged tendency toward individualistic formulation of biblical exegesis.

I have written for you a book of laws [says Benjamin in the concluding paragraph of *Mas'ath Binyamin*], so that you should pass judgment according to them upon Karaites, your brethren and friends. Now, for each particular law I have indicated the proper scriptural verse. As for other laws which are utilized in judgment and recorded by Rabbanites and for which I could find no support in the Scripture, I have written them down also, so that you might pass judgment according to them if you so desire.²³

Now, Benjamin draws here a distinct line between two kinds of laws compiled in his Code. On the one hand, he leaves, for obvious reasons, the utilization of Rabbanite-sponsored laws to the discretion of the local Karaite judge. Since these laws have no scriptural backing, the judge may as well ignore them, unless necessity compels him to take cognizance of their availability. Benjamin leaves, however, no such leeway with reference to those *dīnim* (laws) for which biblical evidence has been supplied in his Code. Such laws are put on record so that the judge “should pass judgment according to them.” No mention is made of the right of individual judges, let alone laymen, to deviate from these laws “if they so desire” and to formulate different laws in accord with an independent exegesis of their own.

In brief: Contrary to prevalent conceptions, the individualistic ap-

al-Anwār wa-l-Marākib, I, 52, II, 283, 304, 307; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 372, 376, 383. It is obvious that Kırkisānī's persistent refutation of Abū 'Isā's claim to prophecy was not prompted by mere academic considerations. He himself reported in the first half of the tenth century the existence of a community of 20 'Isūnian families in Damascus. Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 12, 59; Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII (1930), 328, 391. The situation as communicated half a century later by the Muslim al-Bākillānī gives the impression that the 'Isūnian movement was much greater than the partisan Kırkisānī was ready to admit. Cf. R. Brunschvig, in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallierosa*, I, 226 ff. Recently, in my paper on the “Karaite Attitude to Christianity and the Christians,” presented to the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 1957), I believe to have shown to what extent local concern over the still-unextinguished 'Isūnian activity conditioned also Kırkisānī's critique of Jesus' claim to prophecy. Cf. further below, Chapter VIII.

²³ *Mas'ath Binyamin*, 6b (*Karaite Anthology*, 29, § IX): כּבֵּר כְּתַבְתִּי לָכֶם סֵפֶר דִּינִים: כּבֵּר שְׂחֵדִינֵי בָּם בְּעֵלֵי מִקְרָא אַחֵיכֶם וְרֵעֵיכֶם. וְכִבֵּר עַל כָּל דִּין וְדִין רְמוּתִי עֲלֵי מִקְרָא. וְשֵׂאֵר דִּינִים שְׂחֵדִינֵי בָּם. בָּם וְכַתְּבֵי רֵבִנִים וְלֹא יִכְלֹתִי לִרְמוֹחַ בָּם מִקְרָא, גַּם אֲוֹתָם כְּתַבְתִּי, שֶׂאֵם תַּחֲסִפְרוּ חֲדִינֵי בָּם. My own translation of the passage differs in some respects from that of Nemoy, being of course influenced by my interpretation of Benjamin's philosophy of law. Still, it is a difference of emphasis only. Nemoy's version does not materially affect any of the conclusions reached in the present discussion.

proach to biblical exegesis and to practical legislation was conspicuously absent at the birthplace of Karaism. Alien to the spirit of the Founding Fathers and to the rule of community consensus, which they (erroneously) believed they were fortifying through analogical deductions and scriptural documentation, this individualistic approach marked a new direction, a deviation from the original philosophy of 'Ananite jurisprudence, and a new answer to the sect's novel experience in the late tenth century.

To be sure, the idealistic projection of a tenth-century development back into the days of 'Anan ben David and Benjamin an-Nahāwēndī is not surprising at all. It should be viewed on a par with countless similar cases known from the religious and literary history of Judaism and from the story of mankind at large. The product of a pious expediency at first, it was easily accepted later as the historical truth, both from reasons of sheer ignorance and from the natural tendency toward idealization of the past. It was, thus, largely responsible for blurring the boundaries between the different stages in Karaism's history.

The student of the Byzantine branch of the sect must give serious thought to these crucial tenth-century developments, including the above adventures in pseudo-historical reconstruction. For there, at the feet of the tenth- and eleventh-century masters, Byzantine Karaism acquired the fundamentals of its religious and scholastic training which guided it in its future creativity and helped it on its way through history.

TENTH-CENTURY REVISIONISM

The novel, individualistic approach of the great tenth-century Karaite scholars to exegesis and legislation, which soon attained the rank of a time-honored principle allegedly emanating from the Founding Fathers themselves, tended, for one thing, to justify the splits and dissensions that were tearing the Karaite camp asunder. On the other hand, it was designed to promote the doctrine of individual responsibility which was to become now a household word with Karaite polemicists. Naturally, with the growing caution and tradition-mindedness of the post-Saadyan generations, the right to individual interpretation of the Scripture was not so much a battle-cry of dissident missionary propaganda as the only realistic line by which to defend the sectarian *raison d'être*.²⁴

²⁴ Cf., for instance, the plea of Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ in his oft-quoted Epistle, *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 34 (*Karaite Anthology*, 118 f., §18): כי לא יאמרו בני מקרא כי הם מנהיגים ולא עשו תקן להוליד את העם כחפצם, אבל הם חוקרים ודורשים בתורת משה ע"ח וגם בספרי הנביאים ע"ה וגם

No less intense than the above considerations was the overall tendency in tenth-century Karaism toward an honest and courageous revision of all domains of the sect's social and scholarly endeavor. This revisionist trend was the inevitable function of the bankruptcy of 'Ananism and the result of the new Palestino-centric direction in which the al-Ḳūmisī school had launched the reawakened Karaite movement half a century earlier.²⁵ In the scholastic field proper, the process of independent interpretation of the Scriptures, once set in motion through the rise of an original exegetical literature in the school of al-Ḳūmisī (and possibly earlier), not only continued by force of its own momentum but engulfed in ever-widening circles the whole range of biblical exegesis, sharply affecting legal thought as well. Since differences in the exposition of the legal portions of the Pentateuch involved new approaches to *practical legislation*, the repercussions of the growing and increasingly disparate exegetical production of the tenth century were perforce deeply felt in all sectors of Karaite law.

Rationalism and individualism would, of course, not stop with that. The questioning of the practical results of earlier legislation was bound to lead to a reappraisal of the very principles which guided the scholars in their interpretation of sectarian law. Such dialectical methods as the overinflated *heḳḳesh*, i.e., analogical deduction (paralleling, in a sense, the *ḳiyās* of Muslim jurisprudence, itself an adaptation from an originally talmudic principle of hermeneutics), were persistently and in some cases successfully challenged by realistic jurists of the late tenth and the eleventh centuries.²⁶

ראים בדברי הראשונים [=חכמי המשנה], על כן הם אומרים לאחיהם בני יעקב: למדו ודרשו חפשו וחקרו (See below, 221, end of note 31.) ועשו מה שיקום לכם בראיה קיימת ויעמוד בדעתכם

Indeed, in the passage from Yefeth's Commentary on Deuteronomy cited by Poznanski the example of the early *Rabbanite* sages is also invoked, alongside that of 'Anan and Benjamin an-Nahāwendī. The mishnaic scholars, too (argues Yefeth), "composed Books of Precepts, and each of them said what he thought [right] and documented it by [scriptural] evidence. . . , and his opinion may or may not be in agreement with the actual truth." Cf. *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 184.

²⁵ See above, *Introd.*, 19 ff., and in Chapter VII, below.

²⁶ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 64d, Alphabets 168-69: בני מקרא משכילי ג"ע: [נחום ערן] נתחלפו מאר באלה מדות התורה. . . ואמנם בהקש מכליל כל המדות, כי בהקיש זה בזה יגלה כח התורה. . . ויש מי שמורה בכתב ובקבוץ ולא יודה בהקש, וזה יוסף בן נח יר"א [=ירחמהו אל] כפי שביארנו למעלה באוני המביגי'.

Indeed, earlier in the same context, 64c-d, Hadassī expatiated more fully on the opposition to the use of the *heḳḳesh*. This opposition was voiced by the late tenth-century Joseph ben Noah and paralleled Saadyah's repudiation of this method, too: הפיתומי סעריה אמר בחכמתו כי אין הקש בתורה. . . ררך בזה הדרך גם יוסף בן נח ג"ע ואמר כי לא יקיש בתורה: והראיה שלו שאמר (במד' ט' ח) עמרד ואשמעה מה יצוה ה' לכם. אמר(ו) ללמודך כי אין הקש וגורה

In addition, the rift between the dictates of common sense and certain rationally inexplicable practices demanded by Scripture must have acutely disturbed the tenth- and eleventh-century Karaite theologians and philosophers. This problem, posed all along by the religious minds of all ages and quite keenly felt by the Saadyan generation, was even more poignant to the Karaites than to their Rabbanite neighbors, in view of the overall tendency in Karaism toward added strictness in the performance of ritual obligations.²⁷

“CONSENSUS” UNDER SCRUTINY

At the same time, realism and conscience began questioning the validity of what remained now of the principle of “general consent” (*edah*). For, in all truth, the *edah*, the original concept of it, that is, now lay emptied of its fundamental content. Ever since the sectarian biblicists began stretching and squeezing the Written Law itself to fit patterns of life and behavior once inspired by “universal agreement,” the import of that agreement seemed to be losing ground progressively. Indeed, what tended in the last analysis to undermine the authority of the Karaite *edah* principle was not only the procedural weakness inherent also in the Muslim (especially Shāfi ‘ite) doctrine of *ijmā’*; it was the very “biblicism”

שה במכתב ושורה. ולו היה משה ע"ה אומר עמדו ואדקדק ואקיש ואשוה ואדבר לכם באזהרה. היה יבשר זה להתגברת.

For the critique of the *heḳḳesh* by Saadyah cf. Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah Gaon*, 69. Cf. also Kīrkisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marākib*, I, 79 ff.; G. Vajda, “Etudes sur Qīrkisānī-II,” *REJ*, CVII (N.S., VII, 1946-47), 66 ff. For the practical application of the tendency to curtail the use of *heḳḳesh* in the field of the Karaite law of incest cf. above, 81 ff. (and note 69). Cf. also our remarks on the realism of the eleventh-century Karaite legislators in Jerusa'lem, above, 207 f., note 8. See, finally, M. Zucker, in *Sura*, II (1955-56), 321 ff.

On the *ḳiyās* in Muslim jurisprudence see Juynboll, *Handbuch des Islamischen Gesetzes*, 50 ff.; Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 98 ff.

²⁷ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 64d, Alphabet 168: הכהן סהל בן מצליח אבו אלטרי . . . וסעיד בן יפת הלוי יר"א הכלילם על ד' רברים בחכמת הדעת ובמשמע ובהקש ובעדה התורה מתגברת. . . וסעיד בן יפת הלוי יר"א הכליל' בני רברי' במשמע ובהקש ובעדה ולא בחכמ' הדעת להתאזרה. כי יאמר הדעת תאסור בדברי' ותחיר בדברי' ותחורה אוסרת מה שיחיר שבל הדעת ומחרת מה שאוסרת החכמה בחכמתך. אבררם כגון (See Levi's view, below, 228, end of note 46). מילה ומעורר ושלום רעה תחת רעה ורומיחן

For the Saadyan influence on Karaite thinking in this field, cf. the acknowledgment of a none-too-friendly Hadassī later in the same context: הגה סעדיה הפיתומי בזה דוק: התורה: ומאמריו יעורו לבעלי מקרא משכילי ג"ע by Poznański and compared with the discussion of the four sources of cognition in Saadyah's Introduction to the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*. See *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah Gaon*, 69 f., and note 2. Needless to say, no comprehensive discussion of the problem nor of Saadyah's role in its elucidation can be undertaken here.

which was now called upon to give scriptural support to practices originally sanctioned by the "consensus of community."

For, with the ever-increasing preoccupation with biblical exegesis as guide to pious behavior, the *'edah* lost its creative capacity and respectability. On the one hand, Bible exegetes would jealously guard their own right to individual interpretation of the letter of the Law, in spite of the fact that the consistent exercise of that right increased academic dissension and deepened the rift between later commentators and the older Karaite school. Yet, they had no patience with the pluralism inherent in the principle of consensus. Paradoxically, they, the spokesmen of a sect whose original *raison d'être* consisted of the conservation of customs sponsored by regional consensus against the uniformitarian pressure of the guardians of "transmitted truth," would, in turn, appeal now for uniformity in the name of a "biblical truth" of their own, as if they themselves were not divided on its meaning. In an effort to stem the rapidly progressing process of disintegration of the movement, they would now gladly deprive regional groups of their age-long custom of following the consensus of *their own* community.²⁸

To be sure, the apprehensions of the commentators were not wholly unfounded. The dissident population, thinned out by now because of its spreading into the new urban centers of the Caliphate and because of the inroads of Rabbinism into areas in which the sectaries once had lived in well-knit communities, lacked a nerve-center for responsible socio-religious creativity. Consequently, the *'edah* was deprived of its

²⁸ Deploring the differences between the various Karaite groups (in the text quoted in our next note), al-Kūmisī accused the opposing factions of "not turning to the study of the Torah so that they may know which is the true way."

To what extent *regional* divergences were responsible for the formation of separate beliefs and modes of life among the Karaites can be gauged from Kīrkisānī's list of inner Karaite differences. Cf. his *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāqib*, I, 60 ff.; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 392 ff. In that list Kīrkisānī enumerates the practices of "some [people] of Baghdād" (بعض البغداديين); "some [people] of Tustar" (بعض التستريين); "people from among the Baṣrans and from Fars" (قوم من البصريين والفارس); "some Karaites of Syria" (بعض قرائين الشام); "some Karaites of Khorāsān" (بعض قرائين الخراسانية); "some of the Karaites of Khorāsān and Jibāl" (بعض قرائين خراسان والجمال). That the expression "some people" refers to Karaites is clear from the phrase following the description of the customs of "some people of Baṣra and Fars." Alluding to these Baṣrans, Kīrkisānī states the following: "The above-mentioned Karaites from Baṣra" (القرائين المتقدمين من البصريين). It is obvious that the same applies to all other cases. The title of the whole chapter leaves no doubt about it (فذكر ما يختلف فيه القرائين).

broader and *unifying* scope; instead, it turned into the proving-ground of an infinite *variety* of small-scale consensuses and, sponsored by scores of splinter groups, brought the movement to the brink of anarchy. In vain did al-Ḳūmisī deplore the sectional practices followed (no doubt on the strength of some local consensus) by groups “who call themselves Karaites.”²⁹ A dismayed Kırķisānī exclaimed in despair that there are no two Karaites in the early tenth century who agree on one matter and that the situation “is growing worse day by day.”³⁰

Of course, though more or less contemporaries, the two scholars were motivated by different philosophies and considerations when complaining about the irritatingly heterogeneous make-up of Karaite practices. The Palestino-centric al-Ḳūmisī regarded the regional and group differences—stemming from variations of environment and of economic pursuit in the Diaspora (or, as he put it, from “running in tumult after merchandise similar to the custom of the Gentiles”)—as real stumbling-blocks on the road to unity and uniformity to which the Jerusalem center felt destined to lead the movement. On the other hand, Kırķisānī, the Diaspora Jew with no marked nationalist leanings, could not ignore the possibility that the Rabbanites would exploit Karaite dissensions as a counter-argument, “whenever we [i.e., the Karaites] blame them for the differences between the people of Syria [=Palestine] and the people of Babylonia.”³¹

²⁹ Cf. his “Tract of an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem,” published by Mann, *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921–22), 257 f. [this part is not included in Nemoy’s abridged English version of the text in *Karaite Anthology*]: וגם אחריהם [ר”ל אחר הרבנים] עמוד הקוראים לנפשם בעלי מקרא ויאמרו לא בשבת חג המצות וסוכות ולא עלינו תומאת מת ומצורע. . . יש גם בבעלי מקרא אומרים משפט י”י על הרוח לבדה ולא על הגוף. . . וגם כחש בתחיית המתים. . . וגם בבעלי מקרא שאינם שומרים אביב וגם בבעלי מקרא מתירים לאכול בשר בקר וצאן היום הזה ואומרים עליך תאויל [תאויל, ר”ל ביאור שלא כפשוטו] והוא פתרון שקר. וגם שולחים משאות ואגרות בשבת וכאלה הרבה. וקשה מאד בעיני י”י כי הם הומים בסחורות כמנתג הנגיים. . . על בן אינם פונים לחקור בתורה האזיה דרך אמת.

³⁰ Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 14 (Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 330), and earlier, I, 5 (*HUCA*, 321), as well as the list of the divergent Karaite groups cited above, 219, note 28.

³¹ *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 63 f. (Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII [1930], 396). Kırķisānī assures his coreligionists that they should not be afraid of such Rabbanite counter-arguments. Karaite internal controversy is the inevitable outcome of legal knowledge arrived at by reason. Such extenuating circumstances, however, cannot be claimed by the Rabbanites, who point to their laws as being based on a prophetic (hence incontestable) tradition. The existence of controversy within Rabbinic Jewry (argues Kırķisānī) bares the falsehood of such Rabbanite assertion. Indeed, Kırķisānī himself included a list of “differences” in law and ritual between the Rabbanites of Palestine and those of Babylonia. Cf. his *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 48 ff.; Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII (1930), 377 ff. The Rabbanite material on the subject has been reedited by M. Margalioth, *Ḥillūkīm shebbēn Anshē Mizraḥ u-Benē Ereṣ Yisrael*.

Whatever the case, they both realized that a truly *universal* “agreement of the community,” the way ‘*edah*’ was expected to be when taken as a source of law, was, under the changed conditions of a diversified Karaite society, no longer attainable.

“‘EDAḤ” AND “‘IJMA’”

Indeed, such an agreement was hardly welcome by now, even on principle. Developments within the late tenth-century Jewish society as a whole made the continuous application of the rule of consensus by the sectaries a rather precarious procedure. For the rule was undoubtedly convenient and effective as long as the non-normative practices were adhered to by homogeneous groups living on the peripheries of Jewish settlement. However, with the expansion of talmudic authority into the far-off corners of the Jewish Diaspora, and with the growing standardization of life in general in the highly commercialized Middle Eastern society, there emerged among the majority in the community a growing awareness of the sectarian connotation attached to many of the discarded regional ways and customs. Practices once dominant in whole regions remained now the heritage of the few.

The principle of community consensus must therefore have become an outdated slogan to a group doomed to a fate of being a perpetual minority in the Jewish world. Under the changed circumstances, close to the turn of the first millennium C.E., it was a principle fraught with danger and capable of boomeranging against the sectaries themselves. For the power of the consensus now lay irretrievably with the talmudic majority.³² Not in vain were some ideologists of the movement inclined to make Karaite legislation hinge on two determinants only: the Scripture and analogical deduction. The suggested rejection of ‘*edah*’ as one of the sources of sectarian law came as a cautious yet unequivocal recognition of contemporaneous reality: after all, “there may be inadvertent

Cf. also Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, in *Liḳḳūṭē Qadmoniyyoth*, App. III, 34 (*Karaite Anthology*, 119), calling to those of the Rabbanites who apparently were influenced by the piety of the sectarian “Mourners” in Jerusalem, yet were also honestly perplexed by the dissensions within the Karaite camp: “Do not say, ‘How shall we act, since the Karaites also differ among themselves. Whom among them shall we follow? . . . Study and search and seek and investigate and do that which occurs to you by way of solid proof and that which seems reasonable to you.’” Cf. above, 216 f., note 24.

³² It is in this connection that the problem of majority rule (*aḥarē rabbim le-hafṣoth*) is heatedly discussed in Karaite literature from the tenth century on. Invoking Ex. 23:2, the Karaites did not cease to reiterate their right—indeed, their religious obligation—to secede from the consensus of the (Rabbanite) majority, for “thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” Cf. the texts quoted above, 54 ff., notes 73-75.

error on the part of the *whole* community.”³³ This telling explanation of why ‘*edah*’ should be deprived of its legislative powers—so different from the Sunnite assertion attributed to the Prophet that “never will my community be united in error”³⁴—permits us an insight into the workings of the mechanism of Karaite reaction to the changing and increasingly hostile content of community consensus, and brings to mind the example of Shi‘ism.

Comparisons between Shi‘ism and medieval Jewish sectarianism under Islām have been attempted with different degrees of caution and success, ever since the establishment of modern Karaitic research a century ago. However, the problem was always analyzed with reference to the *rise* of Karaism, its background and its immediate causes; as such it has no relationship to our discussion. The following comments will be limited to the specific question now under consideration, namely, the waning of ‘*edah* and *ijmā‘*’ in Karaism and Shi‘ism respectively. These comments do not necessarily suggest indebtedness; rather they point to the *inescapable* reaction of a minority seeking to provide a rationale for its own position and a justification for its insistent repudiation of the majority rule.

In a way, the Karaite attitude parallels in our case the line of reasoning and action followed by Shi‘ite Islām versus *ijmā‘*, i.e., versus the general consent of the Muslim community. While the foundation-stone of the orthodox concept of *ijmā‘* was the confidence that the consenting community must be infallible (*ma‘ṣūm*), the Shi‘ites could obviously not acquiesce to the idea of infallibility of a community in which their Sunnite opponents constituted the majority. Did not the recognition of the Caliphate and the acceptance of the political *status quo* in Islām by the Sunnite-sponsored “consensus of the community” prove the error of such consensus and the unreliability of the very principle of *ijmā‘*?³⁵

Moreover, there is even, to some extent, a basic similarity in the Shi‘ite and Karaite approach to the solution of the dilemma. Having deposed *ijmā‘* from its high-ranking status in Muslim jurisprudence,

³³ Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 64, Alphabet 168: ויש מי שהבליים בשם (Poznański corrected the corrupted בשם to read בשני בשם . . כי אולי (בשני בשם) בדבר' במשמע ובחשק ולא יורה בעדה. . . כי אולי (בשני בשם) בדבר' במשמע ובחשק ולא יורה בעדה. . . נפלה שגגה בגלל העדה. Cf. also line 2 of the text quoted below, 248, note 97.

³⁴ Cf. Juynboll, *Handbuch des islamischen Gesetzes*, 47; I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islām*, 54. A Rabbanite counterpart of that Sunnite dictum was the slogan בי לא יעבור שיצא האמת מכל ישראל [אל] ולא שיתקבץ כל ישראל [אל] על שוקר. Saadyah's assertion to this effect was quoted and combatted by Levi ben Yefeth in his hitherto unpublished *Book of Precepts*, Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 13a f.

³⁵ Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, 283 f.

Shī'ism was ready to accord it some authority, provided it won the concurrence of the imāms or of their authorized representatives.³⁶ Similarly, Karaism would agree to recognize 'edah whenever the latter was properly supported by authority — authority of the Scriptures, that is, or of its rightful (i.e., Karaite) exponents.³⁷

This is, however, where the parallel comes to an end. There is no resemblance between the fate of the 'edah and that of Shī'ite *ijmā'* in subsequent generations. For, unlike Shī'ism, Karaism failed to attain anywhere (except, for some time, in Palestine) a degree of authority or numerical strength that would enable it to insist on the above formulation of consensus. Alas, there could be no evading of reality in a Rabbanite-ruled community nor escape from compromise. Whether the Karaites chose to admit it or not, the suggested solution, linking the recognition of 'edah to scriptural support, could not be bolstered by facts. Pious intentions had to bow to sober reality. The story of 'edah is thus, in a nutshell, the story of Karaism in general, the story of the sect's inevitable adjustment to the ruling (Rabbanite) majority.

THE FORCE OF TRADITION

Having lost its original source of strength, the 'edah increasingly absorbed the features of another principle with which it was integrally connected, although the sect was for a long time reluctant to admit it and had no specific name for it. That other principle was "tradition." To use the corresponding nomenclature of Muslim *uṣūl al-fikḥ*, or roots of jurisprudence, the *ijmā'* (universal consent) was now confused with the *sunna* (i.e., the proper conduct and custom transmitted by tradition).³⁸

To be sure, this was not an entirely novel or unusual development, since the so-called consensus of the dissident community, though not identical with tradition, was primarily based on time-honored precedents of behavior which were faithfully followed by that community.³⁹ In

³⁶ Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islām*, 225 f.

³⁷ See the texts quoted and discussed further on, 232 ff.

³⁸ The presentation of the phenomenon in corresponding terms from Muslim jurisprudence is Poznański's, *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 182, n. 3. On the *sunna* as "living tradition" see Schacht, *Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*, 58 ff.

Characteristically, however, the Karaites refrained from using the term *sunna* and preferred the term *an-naql*, meaning "transmission." See the text below, 229, note 48, and Vajda's pertinent observation in *REJ*, CVII (1946-47), 93, notes 47-48.

³⁹ Cf. Schacht, *op. cit.*, 58, where the point is stressed that the *sunna* and the *consensus* "are all interrelated and, in fact, interchangeable to such an extent that they cannot be isolated from one another."

other words, it stemmed from accumulated regional traditions which the given community saw fit to preserve, in spite of the repudiation of these traditions by the central talmudic authorities. Nevertheless, under the circumstances, the above developments had a new ring altogether. The equation of "consensus" and "tradition" opened the way for legalizing customs, old and new, for which no hermeneutical support could be mustered. Now that the sanction of consensus was lacking, the mighty force of tradition provided a solid foundation for the persistence of biblically unsupported mores. Intrinsically, however, the unification of the two principles was an unequivocal admission of the fact that even the Karaites, who so vocally rejected Rabbinical reliance on oral transmission, could not avoid the cumulative impact of tradition. It was thus an ominous sign of the course into which Karaism was bound to drift during the next thousand years.

The late tenth- and eleventh-century Palestinian Karaite masters were, of course, not unaware of these developments. It was, however, their Byzantine disciple, Tobias ben Moses, who first fully realized their implications and endeavored to translate them into *legal usage*. Fearing that his native community might fall prey to corroding doubts when confronted with the inescapable necessity of compromise with circumstances, Tobias decided to lend outright *sanction* to the identification of consensus with tradition. It is in connection with the definition of this practice that I view the introduction of the concept of *ha'ataḳah* into Karaite legal literature.

"HA'ATAKAH"

As far as can be judged from the extant texts, it was Tobias who first established the specific legal application of *ha'ataḳah*.⁴⁰ The term as such has been traced to geonic literature of the early days of Hai Gaon (i.e., the last decade of the tenth century), whence it was supposed to have been borrowed by the Karaites.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The thesis that Tobias was the first among the Karaite scholars to *use* the term was suggested by Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 182, note 3. It will be shown presently that this thesis is erroneous. My comments in "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 9, note 21, where I have followed Poznański, have been corrected accordingly. Cf. *PAAJR*, XXV (1956), 178 ff., note 2.

⁴¹ Cf. Rabbi Elhanan's query addressed to Hai Gaon in 993 C.E. and published by Harkavy in his *Studien und Mittheilungen*, IV, 24, Responsum No. 47 (cf. the editor's notes there, 351 and 394). Similarly, see Hai's Responsum No. 119, in *Temim De'im* (forming part of *Tummath Yesharim*, Venice, 1622), 22d. On the use of *ha'ataḳah* by the twelfth-century Abraham ibn Ezra in an anti-Karaite context, see my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 195.

Now, it can, of course, be taken for granted that *any* Hebrew term for "tradition" was of Rabbanite origin. The Rabbanites alone made the adherence to tradition a paramount matter of principle. Hence, they also developed the proper terminology when defining and discussing that principle. To the extent that early Karaites, too, utilized the Rabbinic expressions, they did so only in order to denote and *reputate* the Rabbanite concept of tradition.

However, the sources offered till now in support of the Rabbanite authorship of *ha'atakah* are all very late. Unless we revise our concept altogether and consider the term as an original Karaite creation—and there seems to be no corroborating evidence to warrant such a revision—we must assume that the Rabbanites used it in Palestine before the 990's, since the Karaite polemicist, Sahl ben Maṣliah, discussed its meaning in an anti-Rabbanite vein more or less in the same period, if not a decade or two earlier.⁴²

A study of the full manuscript version of Tobias' hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad* convinced me that the term *ha'atakah* must have been part of a *Hebrew Saadyan terminology* known in Palestine in the early post-Saadyan era. It is my impression that Hebrew translations of Saadyah's exegetical works (or, at least, the polemical sections thereof) were circulating in Palestine among Rabbanites and Karaites alike, underlying oral and literary debates between protagonists of the two camps. These (mid-tenth-century?) Hebrew Saadyan texts must have contained the term *ha'atakah*—the Hebrew equivalent of Saadyah's Arabic *an-naql*—and it is from there that the term found its way into the subsequent works of Saadyah's Rabbanite successors and into the writings of his Karaite opponents as well.⁴³

Of course, it is difficult to decide as yet whether the term was actually coined by Saadyah or for the sake of translating Saadyah, or merely was

⁴² See the full text of Sahl's discussion further in this chapter, 227 f., and note 46. See also, 232, end of note 54. The exact time of Sahl's activity has yet to be determined. At any rate, it is sure that he was a (younger?) contemporary of Yefeth ben 'Alī in the second half of the tenth century. See the bibliographical references above, 37, note 27 (end).

The verb קִיַּחֲלֵהוּ, as used a generation earlier by Salman ben Yerūham, *Book of the Wars of the Lord* (ed. Davidson), 38, 43, 89, 130, has no legal connotation.

⁴³ My initially very cautious suggestion that Hebrew translations of Saadyah's Commentary were available to scholars in tenth-century Palestine and elsewhere has now been borne out by a Saadyanic student. I have it on the authority of my learned friend Doctor M. Zucker that in the course of his recent Genizah studies in Cambridge he found some 40 leaves of such a Hebrew version. We shall have to await now the publication of the fragment in order to see whether it contains the term *ha'atakah*

used from that time on with greater frequency. Whatever the case, the connection between its appearance in *Karaite* literature and the Saadyan polemic against sectarianism can be taken for granted. It is, indeed, no coincidence that Tobias the Karaite employs *ha'ataqah* and its kindred grammatical forms mainly *when quoting Saadyah* (for the sake of refutation, of course) and when discussing the Saadyan concept of *an-naql*.⁴⁴

SEMANTIC EXPANSION

However, the linguistic aspects of the process reconstructed here, whereby the Rabbanite term *ha'ataqah* was introduced into the Hebrew Karaite vocabulary in late tenth-century Palestine, gives but one side of the story. The real importance of this process is revealed to us only when an attempt is made to trace the subsequent semantic expansion of the *ha'ataqah* concept as it entered the body of legal principles in Byzantine Karaism. In this respect it is symbolic of the evolution that Palestinian Karaite legislation as a whole had undergone in Byzantium.

and whether it yields any data which would help determine the time of the translation. At any rate, the extant leaves (so I am informed) belong to Saadyah's Commentary on Leviticus to which Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* is also devoted.

(It goes without saying that Saadyah's *Arabic tafsir* on the Pentateuch is of no relevance to the present discussion; nor shall we cite here the literature pertaining to it.)

⁴⁴ Cf. Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad*, in the Bodleian MS No. 290, 6a: ואמר סעדיה הפיתומי . . . כי אש' אמרו זה הדבר [=בענין המליקה] אין להם ראייה על זה הדבר מן הל[תובן]. אבל הם מדרך ההעתיקה מן הספרים [צ"ל: הסופרים] ומגידים מה שראו בעיניהם מן המעשה. ובאמת כי הדבר אש' [צ"ל: כאש] אמ' הפיתומי כי מן הכת' אין ראייה ודע כי סעדיה הפיתומי אמ' כן. ואש' אמר מלך את ראשו בא לנו בהעתיקה

כי המליקה היא הפרדת שלשלת הצואר. . . אמ' הפיתומי זה הדבר [צ"ל: דבר] And again 35a: הראשונים אש' ראו המקדש איך היה יעשה בויע' [גני] הם אש' היו בזמן שהמקדש קיים. וראו איך תעשה המליקה בעוף. וא[מר] הפיתומי ולא היו האנשים באש' אמ' מזו המלאכה מראים ראייה מן הכת' אבל היו מעתיקים ואמר [=סעדיה] ואני אומ' מה שיחזקו ואיך: 87a: And further, 87a: יספרו ויגידו מה שראו מן המעשה ודע כי אין: 87b: also on 87b: ירליכוהו ואסיר זה ואוליך אותו אל דרך הנכון והשלם אש' משה ההעתיקה יא[מר] לו: 89b: Cf. also on 89b: להם על כל טנים ראייה חזוק לדבריו שאמ' מי שהוא משה ההעתיקה [=לסעדיה] הגד לנו על עצמך. החפרידי בין שא[מר] תלבו אליה תמימה ובין שא' כאשם ואח כל תלבו ירים ממנו את האליה. ואם יאמ' היך יבוקש התפרד ולא ימצא לא מן הדעת ולא מן התו[רה] ולא Here, incidentally, is the oldest formulation of the three sources of Karaite jurisprudence in which *ha'ataqah* is mentioned in full-fledged association with Reason (*da'ath*, or simply *heḳḳesh*, i.e., analogical deduction) and Torah (or the *kathüb*, i.e., the Written Word). This formulation was to remain the guiding principle of Byzantine Karaite legislation for centuries to come. Cf. below, 237 f., notes 69 and 71.

For other passages containing the term *ha'ataqah*, cf. the Bodleian text of *Oṣar Neḥmad*, e.g., 94b ff., and throughout the MS. In at least one connection Tobias uses also the phrase *anshē ha-ha'ataqah*, "the people of transmission." Similarly, Tobias' younger Byzantine contemporary, the author of *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous* (see on him below, 245 f., note 93), uses the form *ma'atīqim* when quoting Saadyah. Cf. the hitherto unpublished Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 219a-b. It is worth noting that the

Ha'atakah, meaning literally "transmission," seemed acceptable to Palestinian Karaites if it included the *written transmission alone*. The "transmission" thus understood referred to the prophetic and priestly tradition in Israel and was said to encompass only the post-Mosaic portions of the Jewish Bible. This clearly contrasted with the Rabbanite interpretation of *ha'atakah* as *oral tradition*, transmitted by *ma'atikim*, or "reporting sages," who "lived in the time of the Temple" and "used to relate what they actually saw performed."⁴⁵

"[Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock] and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (Cant. 1:8). As for "the shepherds" [explains a tenth-century Palestinian Karaite, reading into the Song of Songs problems of his own time], these are the shepherds of justice who tended their flock in truth and compassion. Such are the Prophets who speak from the mouth of God, and the Priests and Judges who act according to the Torah. And "the shepherds' tents" are their *books and prophecies which are transmitted along with the Torah by the hand of [the people of] Israel, and this, indeed, is the transmission (ha'atakah) which all recognize [as true]*. Now, if someone should argue that "the footsteps of the flock" alludes to the ways of the many [i.e., of the Rabbanite majority], and that "the shepherds' tents" refers to the pronouncements of the [talmudic] sages under all circumstances—his argument is not valid.⁴⁶

Hebrew of his Saadyan quotations differs slightly from that of Tobias (e.g., in the two passages quoted first in the present note).

Incidentally, in the Hebrew version of an even earlier work, the as yet unpublished *Sefer Mišwoth* of Levi ben Yefeth, composed in Palestine in 1006–7, we also encounter the frequent use of *ha'atakah*. Cf., for instance, the excerpts in Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. X, 89, and the passages quoted further in this study from Leiden MS Warner No. 22. Indeed, on fol. 75b of the MS, we find the two terms—the Arabic *an-naql* and its Hebrew counterpart *ha'atakah*—alongside each other: והעתקה אלנקל.

It should be noted, however, that whereas Levi's *original* Book of Precepts was indeed written almost half a century prior to Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad*, the work in its *Hebrew* garb, as we have it today, does not antedate Tobias. Consistent with the general rule formulated in the previous chapter (p. 190) with regard to Hebrew Karaite texts from eleventh-century Palestine, it stands to reason that the Hebrew *Sefer Mišwoth* of Levi ben Yefeth is a translation—a product of the translation activity undertaken in the middle and the second half of the eleventh century in the Byzantine school of Tobias ben Moses. Indeed, in his *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 58b, Tobias refers to Levi's Code in a matter-of-fact manner which evidently suggests a more than average interest in the work: כּאשׁ' אַמִּי רֹב הַמְלָמִידִים יִרְאֵל [=יִרְחַמּוּ אֵל] בְּגַן עֵדֶן, וְחָפֵשׂ בְּסֵפֶר מִצְוֹת לְמַלְאָכָא [ר] לֹוי בֶן יִפֶּת הַלֹּוִי יִרְאֵל [יִרְחַמּוּ אֵל] וְחִמְצָא אוֹתָם (ל)שֵׁם מְבֹרָרִים. Hence, the fact that *ha'atakah* appears also in that eleventh-century work does not contribute in any way to the solution of the basic problem discussed here: the problem of the *earliest* introduction of the term *ha'atakah* into Karaite literature.

⁴⁵ Cf. the Saadyan text quoted in the preceding note from Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 35a. Cf. also the Rabbanite texts (from *Lekah Tōb*) quoted in the last chapter of this study, notes 14–16.

⁴⁶ Cf. Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 34: [רעִי] וְרַעִי אַתְּ גֵרִיתִיךָ עַל מִשְׁכְּנֹת הַרְדְּעִים. וְהַרְדְּעִים הֵם רַעִי צֹרֵק אֲשֶׁר רַעוּם בִּאֲמַת וּבְחַמְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם, וְהֵם הַנְּבִיאִים הַמְדַבְּרִים מִשֵׁי ה' הַחֲבִיבִים הַשׁוֹפְטִים הַעוֹשִׂים כְּתוֹרָה. וּמִשְׁכְּנֹת הַרְדְּעִים הֵם סִפְרֵיהֶם וְנִבְנֹאוֹתֵיהֶם הַנִּעֲתָקוֹת עִם הַתּוֹרָה בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִיא הַעֲתָקָה אֲשֶׁר הִבֵּל מוֹדִים בָּהּ וְהֵם

to gain popularity in subsequent writings, apparently because it was too reminiscent of the label *ba'alē haḳ-ḳabbalah* (the "Traditionists"), pinned on the Rabbanites by later generations of Karaite polemicists.

The trend of equating consensus with *ha'ataḳah*, though having its roots in an older stratum of legalistic development, did not find a clear-cut formulation *in its expanded, Rabbanite-modeled pattern* prior to the legal doctrine of Tobias ben Moses.⁴⁸ In fact, even Tobias suggested only

⁴⁸ In his critical inquiry "Against Whom Did Se'adya Ga'on Write the Polemical Poem *Essā Meshali?*" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXVII (1957), 62 f., M. Zucker has rightly called attention to the interesting Chapter XVIII of the Second Discourse of Ḳirḳisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāḳib*, in which consensus (*ijmā'*) was treated jointly and interchangeably with transmission (*naḳl*). Cf. the text in Nemoy's edition of the work, I, 141-49; see also there, 111, the title of Ch. XII of the same Discourse.

However, Zucker's invocation of the Ḳirḳisānī text as proof that "consensus" and "transmission" in Karaite literature were always synonymous constitutes an unwarranted simplification of the matter. Not only was the invoked text composed as late as the 30's of the tenth century, i.e., when the above-described overintellectualization of Jewish sectarianism had already brought the creative function of consensus to a standstill, but even the passage itself, cited by Zucker in support of his assertion, shows exactly the opposite of what it was called upon to prove. It is obvious that Ḳirḳisānī represents merely an initial stage in the very process of intertwining of concepts and interchanging of terms, as reconstructed all along in the present chapter.

Now, this is, in effect, what Ḳirḳisānī has to say of the two terms (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 141; cf. also the French translation from the Arabic by Vajda, "Etudes sur Qirḳisani —II," *REJ*, CVII [N.S. VII, 1946-47], 93; the present English translation is mine): "A group from among the 'Ananites and the Karaites declares the plea of consensus valid for certain areas of Divine precepts. They consider it [i.e., the consensus] one of the ways by which the knowledge of commandments can be arrived at. The methods of deriving that [knowledge] are three: the [scriptural] text, the analogical deduction, and the consensus. Now, *there are some among them* [i.e., among that group of 'Ananites and Karaites] who call it [=the consensus] "transmission" (ان جماعة من العانانية

والقرائين يثبتون حجة الاجماع في مواضع من الفرائض ويزعمون ان ذلك احد الوجوه التي يوصل منها الى معرفة الوصايا وذلك ان الوجوه التي يؤخذ منها ذلك ثلثة النص (والقياس والاجماع وبعضهم يسمي ذلك نقلا I fail to see how this statement can be interpreted as proof of the general and self-evident synonymy of "consensus" and "tradition" (or "transmission") all through Karaite history. Rather, it confirms the picture of legalistic *evolution* drawn in the foregoing pages, by showing the early tenth-century stage in the growing confusion of terms, ever since such concepts as *'edah* and *ḳibbūṣ* lost their original meaning in the dissident society.

Even more obvious is the *semantic* difference between what Ḳirḳisānī terms the "genuine" or the "perfect" [*aṣ-ṣaḳiḥ*] transmission and both its Rabbanite counterpart and the later (expanded and Rabbanite-patterned) Karaite *ha'ataḳah* as developed in the Byzantine environment. This follows not only from Ḳirḳisānī's discussion and critique of the different interpretations of the term that were to be found in the Karaite camp of his time, but also from the connotation he himself considered most acceptable. Allowing, to be sure, for some peripheral cases, too, Ḳirḳisānī's definition of "genuine transmission" covered, primarily, "all that is to be found in the Book," the way it was preserved and memorized since the days of Israel United with Royalty and Pro-

close kinship between these concepts, not outright synonymy.⁴⁹ It was not until a hundred years have passed that the terms were finally pronounced identical and interchangeable:

Now, *'edah* and *sebel*, *ḳabbalah* and *ha'ataḳah* [says the mid-twelfth-century Hadassī], all these four terms have one and the same content.⁵⁰

This, then, was the climax of a semantic evolution, reflecting an evolution in attitude and outlook that occurred in the sphere of Karaite legal thought in Byzantium. Endowed with the new, expanded meaning, *ha'ataḳah* served, in turn, as the foundation-stone for the specific Byzantine slant in the legal and social history of Karaism which can be witnessed all along from the eleventh to the sixteenth century.

COPING WITH NEW REALITIES

Ha'ataḳah was a double-edged sword designed to cut any knot in the legalistic confusion that the Karaite community was bound to encounter in a new environment. It legalized, *qua tradition*, observances that were originally called forth by the *consensus of dissident communities* in the fringe regions of the Jewish Diaspora—observances that were now

phets. Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 148, beginning of §14 (see in French, Vajda, *REJ*, CVII [N.S. VII, 1946-47], 96): فكل ما كان من هذا الجنس مما هو موجود في الكتاب فهو القل الصحيح على ما قلنا انه كان محفوظا محروسا باجتباع الامة والملك الانبياء.

In this sense, Ḳirḳisānī's *an-naql aṣ-ṣaḥiḥ* was not much different from the concept of *ha'ataḳah* as understood half a century later by the Palestinian Saḥl ben Maṣliāḥ (above, 227, note 46). It surely had little to do with the subsequent Byzantine connotation of the term. See also note 50, below.

Incidentally, in the light of our findings in the present chapter, the tenth-century term *ha'ataḳah*, and not *massoreth*, is more in the spirit of the time and should be preferred whenever translating into Hebrew the Arabic *an-naql* in the works of Saadyah or Ḳirḳisānī. Indeed, even Zucker himself, who translated *massoreth*, found it necessary (and quite correctly so!) to express another form stemming from the same root, *nāḳilūn*, through the Hebrew *ma'atīkim*. Cf. his "Fragments from Rav Saadya Gaon's Commentary to the Pentateuch from MSS" (Hebrew), *Sura*, II (1955-56), 342.

⁴⁹ Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 95b: כי מה ששען זה האיש הפיתומי [=סעדיה] מזו ההעתיקה רואת וזה מראה לך זה הפיתומי וסיעתו יקל בעיניהם לזכור הירושה יע[ני]. And again, 97a: ודרך הנביאים והלמוד וההעתיקה וקבוץ האומה והדומי להם *yerushshah* (cf. next note) appear frequently together. Cf., for instance, Bodl. MS No. 290, 99a f. See there also, 110b, the use of *ḳibbūṣ* alongside *ha'ataḳah* (but not synonymous with it) ונתעשרנו על קבוץ האמה ועל ההעתיקה.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 64d, Alphabet 169: והעדה והסבל הקבלה וההעתיקה (ו)ארבע. הלשונות תוכן אחד להם. As for the term *sebel* appearing in this context, a comprehensive study of the manuscript material of the eleventh century convinced me—contrary to earlier views—that its "karaization" and elevation to the rank of a legal concept in Karaism occurred *after* the *ha'ataḳah* metamorphosis described here. Hence, the story of the semantic expansion of *sebel* will have to be deferred to a future

regarded as integral components of Karaite lore.⁵¹ Denoting 'edah, on the other hand, it kept the door open for *new adjustments* in a different environment, by preserving the basic maxim of conforming to consensus—this time, however, inevitably meaning the *consensus of the normative*

volume. Since, however, both *sebel* and *yerushshah* (as well as *sebel hay-yerushshah*) are invoked in the texts adduced in the present chapter, a brief explanation is in order.

Like *ha'ataqah*, *sebel* and *yerushshah* belong to the Saadyan literary stratum. They were invoked, e.g., by Salman ben Yerūham when combatting Saadyah. Cf. his *Book of the Wars of the Lord* (ed. Davidson), 48, 49, 50, 66, 73, 76, 77. *Yerushshah*, meaning "heritage," denoted, of course, a body of lore transmitted and inherited by generations of believers. *Sebel* meant the same. It was explained by Geiger as another counterpart of the Arabic *an-naql*, i.e., transmission. Cf. his note in Blumenfeld's periodical *Oṣar Neḥmad* (not to be confused with Tobias' eleventh-century work going by the same name!), IV (1863), 15. Cf. also Pinsker's still earlier remark in *Likḳūṣē*, App. III, 20 f., note 5.

The first sign of Karaite adoption of the terms in a more positive vein is already apparent in the late tenth century, in the writings of the self same Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ who, we remember, was ready also to give a Karaite twist to the term *ha'ataqah*. While Salman made the Saadyan *sebel* and *yerushshah* boomerang against Saadyah himself, Sahl seems inclined to introduce them into Karaite terminology. But, as with *ha'ataqah*, he imposes on them a limitation which alone could make them at that time palatable to the Karaite taste: Transmission, insofar as sanctioned by Karaism, was the *written* transmission only. Cf. *Likḳūṣē*, App. III, 20 f., letters ט-→, 22, letter ב.

Unlike *ha'ataqah*, however, *sebel* (or *sebel hay-yerushshah*; *sebel hay-yōreshim*) did not seem acceptable to the Byzantine Hebrew school of the eleventh century. In none of the Hebrew originals or translations composed by Byzantine Karaites in that century could I find a single mention of *sebel*. *Yerushshah* alone enjoyed widespread use. Thus, Tobias invoked it interchangeably in three different connotations: a) to denote the Saadyan, i.e., the purely Rabbinic concept of tradition (cf. first quotation in note 49); b) to mean the *written* transmission as acceptable to Sahl (see second quotation in the same note); and, finally, c) in the new Byzantine understanding of the term as the body of *unwritten* observances (cf. the second quotation in note 51, below).

Only in the twelfth century was *sebel* (obviously in the last-mentioned connotation) pronounced synonymous with *ha'ataqah* in its expanded meaning (see Hadassī, beginning of the present note). But it was probably not until the fourteenth or fifteenth century that the term entered into legal use as the third principle of Karaite jurisprudence. At that time, its Rabbinic origin was completely forgotten by Rabbanites and Karaites alike. Also forgotten in the non-Arabic environment was the original meaning of *sebel*=*an-naql*. *Sebel hay-yerushshah*, believed by then to be a Karaite expression *par excellence*, came to denote the "burden of heritage," paralleling such well-known Rabbinic expressions as "yoke of precepts" (*Berakhoth*, II, 2), "yoke of the law" (*Aboth*, III, 5), etc. This development is clearly illustrated by the Bashyachi text quoted below, 232, note 53, and other passages.

In brief: *Sebel* passed through the same, though somewhat delayed, process of "karaization" in a Rabbanite-modeled garb, as did its counterpart—*ha'ataqah*.

⁵¹ See Bashyachi's *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Introduction (partly translated above, 209): אמנם יש מצות אחרות שנתגדלנו בהן מזמן אבותינו ואבות אבותינו והתנהגנו בהם ואינן בתורתנו ושנו להיות כסבע (ראף על פי כן יוצאות מזה מאמרי הנבואה) ואלה יקראו סבל הירשה והעתקה בפי החכמים כגון שזיטת העומות שהיה במאכלת ובכרייתת הסימנים בשיעור הראוי. וכן קדוש החדש שיהיה על פי דגם כי: Cf. also Tobias ben Moses, *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 37b.

majority, given the obvious qualification that it not offend the Karaite conscience or creed.⁵²

An unqualified endorsement of the *ha'ataḳah* principle was surely out of the question. It would leave the Karaites' opposition to talmudic tradition—the nominal *raison d'être* of the sect—an empty shell and expose them to the justifiable accusation of having betrayed the principle of biblicism by having merely substituted at will their own tradition for that of the Rabbanites. In fact, more often than not they could be charged with arbitrarily joining the Rabbanites in one practice while no less arbitrarily rejecting another. This was, indeed, a favorite line of attack on Karaism, launched by spokesmen of the normative majority.⁵³ Some acceptable solution, albeit a legal fiction only or a mere face-saving device, had to be found to circumvent the difficulty. This solution, again a contribution of Byzantine Karaite leadership to the jurisprudence of the sect, made the admissibility of *ha'ataḳah* under the law dependent on two conditions: a) the unanimous adherence thereto of *all Israel*, and not of the majority (i.e., the Rabbanites) alone;⁵⁴ b) a positive support in its favor from the Revealed Word.⁵⁵

מלאכת השחיטה היא ירשה כמי כלל המלאכה ; Aaron ben Joseph, *Mibḥar* on Exodus, 13b : כי הכתוב לא פרט בדברים שהיו האבות נוהגים בהם, כגון השחיטה, שממן מצוה התורות על סבל הירשים ; Bashyachi again, in his opening statement to Ch. I of Section *Sheḥiṭah, Addereth Eliyyahū*, 108d f.; and the later text in Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 528.

The claim of hermeneutical support, put in parentheses in the first quotation, represents quite obviously a rationalization by Bashyachi of the process described here.

⁵² Cf. the texts quoted below, 241 f., notes 79–82.

⁵³ See *Mibḥar*, Intro., 9a: ואין לטעון בערנו שגם אנחנו נשענים על הכתוב ועל ההקש ועל ומה שאמר : Cf. also *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. VIII, 5d: [—מורדים כומטינו] מודע יחדשו [הקראים] קבלו במה שרוצים אשר קראום טבל הירשה והם הסירו מסבל —שכמם. החשובה היא —

⁵⁴ *Mibḥar*, Intro., 9a: או, ההעקתה... אינה בחלוקה נעקתה. אך היא פה אחר מכל ישראל : as against the purely Rabbinical tradition followed by the majority alone, and not by the whole nation: שנטו רוב האומה ופמכו על הקבלה. So also Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. VIII, 5d: [ש] טבל הירשה היא שכל ישראל וכל קבלה. מורדים בה בעלי מקרא ובעלי הקבלה וכל קבלה: שאינה עומדת כנגד הכתוב וכנגד ההעקתה המשתלשלת שכל ישראל מורדים בה ויש לה טיעו מן הכתוב ואמי הכמינו כל קבלה שלא תעמיד כנגד הכתוב: And earlier, in the Introduction: וכל קבלה עלינו ולא תוסיף על מה שאמר הכתוב וכל ישראל מורדים בה ויש לה טיעו מן הכתוב וקבלה עלינו וכן כל : Likewise, Afendopolo, in the excerpt quoted below, 239, 242, notes 76 and 82: חקנת חכמים [—בעלי הקבלה] שעזרת למצות התורה בכלם מודים אנחנו ואין בינם לבינינו שום מחלקת וקטטה וכל ישראל פה אחר בענין ההוא.

The precursors of this reasoning were, no doubt, *Ḳirḳisāni* and *Sahl ben Maṣliḥ*. Cf. above, 227 f., note 46, and 229 f., note 48. In the tenth century, however, Karaite *ha'ataḳah* was conceived as the written body of post-Mosaic biblical tradition alone. The adherence of *all Israel* to such *ha'ataḳah* was, of course, a self-evident reality.

⁵⁵ See the pertinent phrases (טיעו מן הכתוב) in the quotations introduced in the preceding note as well as below, 233 f., 239, notes 56, 57, 75.

Now, the first condition—all-Jewish unanimity—was being disposed of in a natural way, through the ever-growing rapprochement between the two branches of Judaism and the inevitable adjustment of the Karaite minority to patterns of Rabbanite life. However, the second condition—the need of scriptural authority for the novel practices introduced by *ha'ataḳah*—was, as we recall, the Karaite counterpart of the Shī'ite condition for endorsement of *ijmā'* (with the Karaites substituting the authority of the Scripture for that of the Shī'ite imām). Taken at face value, such a condition surely threatened to undo all that the introduction of *ha'ataḳah* as a principle of law was called upon to perform in the first place.

It is in confrontation with that condition that one ought to view the Tobias Doctrine.

THE TOBIAS DOCTRINE

The formal demand of scriptural confirmation of a tradition or custom as *a conditio sine qua non* for their validity was, of course, frequently discussed in Byzantine Karaite literature. In these discussions one crucial dictum appears to be repeatedly invoked by the Byzantine Karaite authorities and invariably attributed by them to Tobias ben Moses.

Thus, it was stated by Elijah Bashyachi, the so-called "last codifier" of Karaite lore in fifteenth-century Constantinople:

And the sages pronounced the following, "Any tradition (*ha'ataḳah*) that has no support in the Written Law is null and void." Now, the sage our master Tobias said of those who maintain that some traditions are in vogue which do not have support in the Written Law, that it is rather their mind which falls short of discovering a foundation for those traditions in the law of the Torah.⁵⁶

In this way the reassuring hand of an understanding leader tried to soothe the qualms of those pious adherents of the sect who must have been in vain ransacking the older Karaite literature, a product of a

⁵⁶ *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. XV, 9d: ואמרו החכמים שכל העתקה שאין לה סיוע מן הכתוב היא בטלה. ואמר החכם ר' טוביא שהאומרים שיש העתקה שאין לה סיוע מן הכתוב אין זה אלא שקצרה יד שכלם למצא כח מדין תורה; and again, Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XIV, 48c, and in the Introduction (see full quotation below, 237, note 69). The Tobias Doctrine was reiterated also in Bashyachi's exposition of the Principles of Faith (*Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section '*Asarah 'Iḳḳarim*, Ch. VI, Pt. 2, 82b)—this time as an anonymous dictum (אמרו חכמים). The same statement was reported verbatim in the name of Tobias almost a century and a half earlier by Aaron ben Elijah, in *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. VII, 8b-c (see the full text as quoted in the next note). See also, 239, note 75, below.

different (Islamic) environment, in quest of a justification of "some traditions that are in vogue which do not have support in the Written Law;" these traditions were plainly absorbed from the Rabbanites or developed by the Karaites themselves on Byzantine soil. Perhaps deliberately couched in terms lending themselves to somewhat unprecise interpretation, Tobias' message to his community conveyed, in effect, the following: Never mind the scriptural basis for the present modifications; it will take care of itself. Continue adapting yourself to the new conditions of life in the Byzantine climate, since the scriptural support for it is there, albeit that our limited intelligence finds it hard to discern it.

The very likely ambiguity of Tobias' formulation is well reflected in the opposing interpretations of the Doctrine by the two most popular Byzantine Karaite legislators, Aaron ben Elijah (14th cent.) and Elijah Bashyachi (15th cent.). Thus, Aaron utilized it in an effort to resuscitate Karaite conservatism and to prove that *ha'ataqah*, if standing alone, cannot qualify as an adequate source of Karaite legislation. Hence, he continued to insist on active biblical support thereto as a condition of its validity.⁵⁷

On the other hand, Bashyachi, a protagonist of the Karaite-Rabbanite rapprochement movement which flourished in the Byzantino-Turkish environment of the fifteenth century, and himself a typical product of such a rapprochement, was also on this point consistent in his unrelenting efforts to liberalize the mode of life of his native community.

Bashyachi's interpretation of the Tobias Doctrine must be viewed against his overall method of documentation and exposition of sources, a method which he developed under the adverse circumstances with which Karaite scholarship had to cope in the fifteenth century.⁵⁸ This method reflected also the social and intellectual creed of the sectarian élite of which Elijah Bashyachi was the foremost spokesman and ideologist.⁵⁹

PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

The gist of Bashyachi's system of interpretation was expressed in the conviction that a Karaite lawmaker, regardless of greatness or courage,

⁵⁷ *Gan 'Eden, Section Kiddūsh ha-Hodesh, Ch. VII, 8b-c:* ודבר זה פסוק מפי כל חכמי הקראים כי כל העתקה שאין לה סיוע מן הכתוב היא בטלה. ואולם האומרים שיש לסמוך בהעתקה לבד מבלי שיש לה סיוע מן הכתוב הנה החכם ר' טוביא נ"ע אומר במאמר פסוק שאין זה אלא מפני שקצרה יד שכלם ממצוא כח מדין תורה.

⁵⁸ Cf. above, 31 f., note 13.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 32, note 14.

had to pay lip-service to clichés of Karaite legal thought in order to avoid the risk of being “trampled by the illiterate mob.” Thus, all his predecessors simply *had* to resort regularly to the subterfuge of disguising their true (and progressive) intentions by outwardly bowing in one context to the accepted norms, while subtly hinting at the advisable (yet unconventional) procedure in a different connection.⁶⁰ Indeed, the realization of the fact that even the most prominent scholars were under compulsion to accept on the surface the conventional ideas and practices of the past and could only hint at the way they believed true, is repeated in Bashyachi’s Code with such insistent frequency that it almost borders on obsession.

Defending, for instance, the introduction of Sabbath candles into Karaite homes in fifteenth-century Turkey, Bashyachi reads into the writings of the greatest legal minds in Karaism, from the eleventh century on, a secret tendency toward the same reform. This tendency, however, could only be smuggled into their pronouncements, “for fear of the mob,” under the false pretence of preserving the *old prohibition* of fire on the Sabbath; at the same time, a *new approach* was introduced in the legal interpretation of that prohibition, paving the way, in effect, for the fifteenth-century innovation.⁶¹

This hit-and-run procedure of frightened intellectuals, claims Bashyachi, was already apparent to “the chosen few” from the discussions of the early eleventh-century Levi ben Yefeth.⁶² It was frankly admitted, according to Bashyachi, half a century later by Yeshū‘ah ben Yehūdah.⁶³

⁶⁰ See Bashyachi’s *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XIX, 52c: אמנם זה מדרך החכמים החסידים כשירצו להעלים דעתם מהמון שלא יהיו מדרס לשונות עמי הארץ יטענו כטענות שהן מבוארות הבטול או שנתבאר כטולן במקום אחר וזה בכונה מהם להבין המשכיל, כל שכן בשיבארו והמתבונן בהפך שיש בין [החכמים] 52b. And earlier in the same Section, דעתם במקום אחר הראשונים... וכין האחרונים... יבין שיש תוך וסתר לרברי האחרונים תה ממנה החכמים החסידים כדי שלא יהיו מטרה בחצי לשונות הסבלים עמי הארץ.

⁶¹ *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XIX, 52b: שהחכמים הנזכרים לא נעלם מהם חתר הדלקת הגר כפי מה שיראה ממאמריהם אחרי העיון, כפי מה שגלו רעתם בקצת מקומות ליחודי סגולות, ומטני פתום מהמון העם ר"ל שלא לעמוד כנגד הפרסום ויהיו הסתה לפריצים החמירו בזה כקצת מקומות (Cf. also the text below, 266 f., and note 42 there.)

⁶² Cf. Ch. XVIII of Section *Shabbath*, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, 50c ff. בראיות שהביאו. (חכמינו לאמת דעתם בענין הבעור [=של אש בשבת] והשובות החכם רבינו לוי כן החכם רבינו יפת עליהם. סוף דבר כונת החכם רבינו לוי שכל הראיות שהביאו חכמינו באסור הדלקת הגר: 51a. And further, סוף דבר המשיין בדברי החכם רבי לוי יבין: 52b: הכל הן בטלות, וזולת הראיה - - שאסור הגר בשבת אינו כי אם על צד החומרה מדרך מעבר הלשון. והנה לפי מה שזכרנו יראה חלוף במאמרי החכמים הנזכרים [=לוי בן יפת ואחרים], זה אי אפשר מצד חכמתם ועיונם המשובת. אמנם (for the continuation of the quotation cf. our previous note.)

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 52b: הלא תראה מה שאמר החכם רבי ישועה בפרשת אחרי מות זה לשונו והרב דברים:

The thirteenth-century Aaron ben Joseph is also quoted in the same vein, in connection with his cautious arrangement of the Karaite prayerbook.⁶⁴ The inevitability of double-talk is likewise summoned by Bashyachi as an excuse for contradictory statements in the writings of the fourteenth-century Aaron ben Elijah.⁶⁵ Indeed, Bashyachi himself admits to having followed the same course and having refrained in some cases from offering an independent view.⁶⁶ The peak was reached when, assuming the same phenomenon for Rabbanite literature also, Bashyachi attributed to an Abraham ibn Ezra or a Maimonides the actual acknowledgment of the truth of Karaism under the guise of conventional polemics against the sect. He even developed a device of his own of reading between the lines of biased Rabbanite writings truths acceptable to his own creed.⁶⁷

It is beyond the scope of this brief summary to inquire whether Bashyachi's reconstruction mirrored faithfully the *actual* ideas and methods of his predecessors, or whether it assembled only *dissecta membra* of earlier literature into a pattern fitting the ideology and the policies of Turkish Karaite intelligentsia. Bashyachi's invocation of the eleventh- and early twelfth-century Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī in connection with the ambivalence of statements he imputed to Ibn Ezra and Maimonides—pointing to al-Ghazzālī's method as typical of intellectuals of all creeds in earlier ages—merely sheds light on the sources which inspired this fifteenth-century way of thinking of Karaite liberals in Turkey; it hardly bears proof of the fact that the eleventh- and twelfth-century Karaite and Rabbanite sages actually pursued that method.⁶⁸

זכרתי על דרך סתם ומהם שמתי עליהם כנויים ורמזים בהרבה בני אדם מבקשים לדעת דרך הידיעה, ואמר שם וקצרתי אותם כדי שלא ישקיף אחד מן הבורים שאין בו בינה ויוציא דופי

ואמר החכם ר"א ב"ה [—ר' אהרן בעל המבחר] בפתיחתו לסודר התפלות שאמר ולולי אנשי דומן אמנם הייתי מחליף הרבה מעניני התפלות כי בכל דור ודור לא יחסרו הסכלים עמי הארץ, כי אין כרם בלי קוצים, ויעקיצו האנשים המשכילים בלשונם הנבלה ונבל דובר, וכל זה מפני שסבעם הפכי לטבעם וההפך מתפעל מהפכו והשם יקח הנקמה מהם ולנמשכים אחריהם.

אמנם לפי הנראה שהחכם הנזכר [—ר' אהרן בן]⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XI, 45d f.: חכם גדול היה, והיה מגלה האמת בנלווי. אמנם מפני פחדו מחצי לשונות הסכלים שלא יהיה מטרה בהם [אליה] חכם גדול היה, והיה מגלה האמת בנלווי. אמנם מפני פחדו מחצי לשונות הסכלים שלא יהיה מטרה בהם היה מפיל ברבריו בתחלת המחשה סתירה והסתר כדי שיובנו דבריו למשכילים ולא יבינו כל רשעים.

ולכן השגחת השם היא במשכיל להצילו מהרע: ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Section *Yōm Kippūr*, Ch. II, 75a: המזכן לבא עליה... ולכן כל נביא לא היה מתנבא בכל עת שירצה וזולת משה שאמר עמדו ואשמעה ובר ג"כ סוד סתום וחזום, ולולי שלא אהיה מדרם ללשונות עמי הארץ אמנם הייתי מאריך בענין זה. ודי למבין

⁶⁷ Cf. the quotations and discussion in my "Elijah Bashyachi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955–56), 61 ff., 184 f., 189 f., 196 ff., and in my general Hebrew sketch in *Ensiġlopedyah 'Ivriṯh* (Enc. Hebraica), IX, 962. Cf. also above, 31 f. For a somewhat resembling modern view of Maimonidean writing, see L. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 38 ff.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ķiddūsh ha-Ĥodesh*, Ch. VI, 3c: ואמנם הדעות אשר העמים [—אבן עזרא] עלינו והשיב עליהם... היה ממנו בכונה, כמו שעשה אבוחמדו בכונות הפלוסופים

Whatever the case, Bashyachi's stand on the *ha'ataḳah* problem and his exposition of the Tobias Doctrine were perforce conditioned by his general approach to sources, as presented above, and by his attributing to these sources multiplicity of meaning and intention.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ECHOES

Thus, on the one hand, he repeatedly referred to the statement of Tobias and reiterated the by then trite demand of a biblical backing for the *ha'ataḳah*. At the same time, however, he did not shrink from revealing his true views when proclaiming, precisely on the basis of the Tobias Doctrine, *the autonomous quality of ha'ataḳah among the sources of Karaite legislation*. These sources were reduced, subsequent to the blending of consensus with tradition, to the following three: the *kathūb* (Divine Writ) or, simply, *Torah*; the *heḳḳesh* (Analogical Deduction) or, in a broader term, *da'ath*, i.e., Reason; and the *ha'ataḳah* (Transmission of Tradition) or the "Burden of Heritage" (*sebel hay-yerushshah*).⁶⁹

Now, the procedure of listing three roots for Karaite jurisprudence belongs, of course, to the incipient stages of Karaite legal thought.⁷⁰

וספר דעוניהם, וסתר דבריהם בהפלה, אח"כ עשה מאמר אחד קצר וגלה סודו אל עבדיו. וכן אמר החכם רבי' משה ב"ר מיימון - - Bashyachi refers here to al-Ghazzālī's *Maḳāṣid al-Falāsifah* (The Intentions of Philosophers), and its sequel, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (Destruction of Philosophers). From the wording of our passage one can easily infer that Bashyachi's library contained the fourteenth-century Hebrew version of the first book, Yehūdāh Nathan's *Kawwanoth hap-Pilosofim* (and not Isaac Albalag's thirteenth-century translation). Indeed, Bashyachi valued this work of Ghazzālī so much that he included it even in his proposed shortened curriculum of instruction (*Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section 'Asarah 'Ikḳarim, Ch. VI, Pt. 2, 82a: ואם לא יספיק הזמן - בלמוד אלה אחר ספרי ההגיון ללמוד ספר הכוונות לאבוחמד). No doubt under the impact of Bashyachi's program of education, the *Kawwanoth* was regularly studied by Karaite students in Turkey; a generation after Bashyachi (in 1510), the Karaite Abraham Bali provided it with a commentary.

The other book of Ghazzālī was known to Bashyachi through the fifteenth-century Hebrew translation, *Happalath hap-Pilosofim*, of Zerahyah Halleṽi. The "small treatise" alluded to at the end of our passage may have been perhaps the *Ma'amar bi-Teshūboth She'eloth Nish'al Mehēm*, a fourteenth-century Hebrew adaptation by Isaac ben Nathan of Ghazzālī's answers to philosophical questions. This treatise, possibly, is identical with the *Kawwanoth hak-Kawwanoth* mentioned by Moses Narboni.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Introd.: ואמר החכם ר' טוביא שכל מי שאומר שיש העתקה שאין לה סיוע מן הכתוב אין זה אלא מקצרון יד שכלו במצוה ההיא. ולכן אמרו החכמים שכל מצוה ומצוה אם שתהיה כתובה ואם שתהיה יוצאת בהקש ואם שתהיה מן ההעתקה. ואמרו על שלושה דברים הכתוב עומד שהעתקה: על הכתוב ועל ההקש ועל סבל הירושה היא מיסודי הדת כי הנה מצאנו שהשם יתעלה יצוה לנו להעתיק על בנינו דברים ותורות וצוה גם בן הבנים לשמוע בקול אביהם. For *sebel hay-yerushshah* see above, 230 f., note 50.

⁷⁰ See the recent discussions of some of the elements of Karaite jurisprudence, in connection with M. Zucker's Hebrew query, "Against Whom Did Se'adyah Ga'on

The novelty introduced into it by the early Byzantine school of Tobias ben Moses lay, as we recall, in the semantic expansion of the third root to absorb a Rabbanite-patterned connotation and in elevating this new connotation to the rank of a full-fledged source of sectarian legislation.⁷¹ Bashyachi, however, when interpreting the Tobias Doctrine, went much further than that: he raised *ha'ataqah* to the *highest* rank among the three roots of Karaite jurisprudence, making it autonomous and independent of any prescribed conditions—nay, making the other roots rather depend on the proper functioning of oral transmission.

And in general [says Bashyachi], if *transmission* [*ha'ataqah*] will not be maintained, then the *Torah* itself could not be maintained. For if the verification of the signs and miracles which Moses performed in Egypt, and of the Revelation at Mount Sinai, etc., were not *transmitted* from a father who saw them with his own eyes to the son, and from him to his son, and so unto this very day—then the *Torah* itself could not be verified. For *the verification of the integrity of the Torah cannot be based on what is written but only on the testimony transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another, beginning with Moses...* Wherefore [our sages] have stated that we cannot deduce *ha'ataqah* from the *Torah*, but rather we must understand the *Torah* through *ha'ataqah*. Thus, we shall know all matters which are explicit in the *Torah* from both the *Torah* itself and from *ha'ataqah*; but those matters which are not explicit in the *Torah* we shall know from *ha'ataqah* alone.⁷²

Chances are that the above words echo not only the teachings which Karaite intelligentsia of the late fifteenth century received from their learned Rabbanite mentors in Constantinople, but also the general scepticism of a Renaissance man in regard to time-honored documents.⁷³

Write the Polemical Poem *Essā Meshali?*”, *Tarbiz*, XXVII (1957), 61 ff., and A. Dothan's independent analysis of the same problem, “Was Ben-Asher a Karaite?” (Hebrew), *Sinai*, XLI (1957), esp. 286 ff. Cf. also Zucker's earlier introduction to “Fragments from Rav Saadya Gaon's Commentary to the Pentateuch from MSS” (Hebrew), *Sura*, II (1955–56), esp. 316 ff., and above, 229, note 48.

⁷¹ Cf. our quotation from Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* (226, note 44), stressing *הדעה* מן התקיים התורה, כי אם לא יתקיים האוחוח והמופחים שעשה משה במצרים ומעמד הר סיני חולחם מאב שראה אותם בעיניו אל הבן וממנו אל בנו עד עתה, לא תחאמת התורה כי אמות התורה ותמימותה לא יתקיים בכתיבתה אלא כעדות איש מפי איש עד משה רבנו עלי השלום... ולכן אמרו שלא נלמוד מן התורה ההעקה אלא מן ההעקה נלמוד התורה והנה כל הדברים המבוארים בתורה נדע אותם מהתורה ומההעקה ואשר אינם מבוארים בתורה נדע אותם מההעקה לבד.

⁷² Cf. *Addereth*, Section *Sheḥiḥah*, Ch. I, 109b: לא תחייים ההעקה לא: ובכלל אם לא תחייים התורה, כי אם לא יתקיים האוחוח והמופחים שעשה משה במצרים ומעמד הר סיני חולחם מאב שראה אותם בעיניו אל הבן וממנו אל בנו עד עתה, לא תחאמת התורה כי אמות התורה ותמימותה לא יתקיים בכתיבתה אלא כעדות איש מפי איש עד משה רבנו עלי השלום... ולכן אמרו שלא נלמוד מן התורה ההעקה אלא מן ההעקה נלמוד התורה והנה כל הדברים המבוארים בתורה נדע אותם מהתורה ומההעקה ואשר אינם מבוארים בתורה נדע אותם מההעקה לבד.

⁷³ Thus, four centuries earlier Tobias would not have dreamed of concurring with Bashyachi's assertion that “the verification of the *Torah* cannot be based on what is written.” Precisely the contrary: he insisted that “observance of the Divine Word according to the *Torah* can be safeguarded only by way of its *written* transmission” (שמירת הדבר על פיה [= ע”פ התורה] לעולם יהיה בכתיבתה). Cf. his *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 96a.

Yet, it goes without saying that the legal exposition at hand means more than an academic analysis of a legal point. It actually constitutes the last and final stage in a chain of *realistic efforts*, undertaken by the Bashyachi school, to make *ha'ataqah* an autonomous and self-sufficient basis for Karaite *legislation*.

Be that as it may, the divergent interpretations of the *ha'ataqah* principle by the two great Byzantine Karaite lawmakers of later centuries, Aaron ben Elijah and Bashyachi, do not represent mere personal opinions of these scholars but generations-old trends of legal thought.⁷⁴ These, in turn, reflect opposing approaches to the crucial problem of social and legislative adjustment to changed conditions. The fact that both sides invoked Tobias entitles us to believe that these ferments date back to the eleventh-century dilemma with which the young Karaite community in Byzantium was confronted. The new formulation of *ha'ataqah* and of its legal application is characteristic of the initial efforts of Tobias ben Moses to answer the sect's immediate needs with what he considered to be of the least detriment to basic Karaite values.

To be sure, even Tobias' legal fiction that biblical support can safely be presupposed for the prevalent observances could not persist much longer. Though academically reiterated as late as the seventeenth century,⁷⁵ it had to give way to a more realistic approach. Rather than insist on positive biblical *support*, all that the Byzantine Karaite scholars could demand was that the customs and traditions, sanctioned by *ha'ataqah*, at least *not conflict* with the Written Word.⁷⁶

THE TALMUD—A RE-EVALUATION

The above developments within the realm of Karaite jurisprudence could not limit themselves to sporadic borrowings from Rabbinic lore

⁷⁴ Cf. the expressions: ואולם האומרים (234, note 57); ולכן אמרו החכמים (237, note 69).

⁷⁵ Cf. Mordecai ben Nisan, *Dod Mordecai*, 7b: ויאמר רבי טוביא העובר ע"ה שכל העתקה שאנו מודים בה יש לה רמז מן הכתוב ואם יאמר אומר שהעתקה פלונית אין לה סיוע מן הכתוב אין זה אלא מקצרון יד שכלו ברמז ההוא, ואין קבלתינו דבר שאין לה רמז מן הכתוב (quoting from Afendopolo's *Asarah Ma'amaroth*).

⁷⁶ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 64d, Alphabet 169: מחזיקות לתורת... מהעתקה... והסכל הקבלה וההעתקה. Similarly, *Mibhar*, 9a: וזו ההעתקה: ומכיון. ולא מוסיפות ולא גודעות ולא הורסות דברי מצות מצורך ומכיון על ההעתקה: which could not be said of the Rabbanites who סמכו על האלהים, שההעתקה זולה הקבלה שחופשים בעלי הקבלה כי ההעתקה מסבמת: *Addereth*, Section *Shehitah*, Ch. I, 109b; למשמעות הכתוב מה שאין בן הקבלה כי היא לפעמים חולקת עליו וידוע: שכל גדר ופיג וכל דבר מצוה שהם ממנה או מסכל הירושה שאין לו סתירה מה מן התורה שככתב וכן כל תקנת חכמים... ככלם מודים אנתנו.

or to a Rabbanite-inspired reformulation of Karaism's native concepts. Eventually, they were bound to transform the attitude of the sect also toward that vast reservoir of Rabbanite literary and scholastic achievement which was symbolized by the Talmud and was regarded for centuries as synonymous with all that Karaism was opposed to.

Karaite interest in Rabbinic writings was, of course, as old as Karaism itself. Had not 'Anan ben David been a Rabbinic scholar of the first rank? Was not Karaism's very existence inseparably intertwined with the Talmud? For, after all, the sect was born in the heat of battle against talmudic institutions and their legislation. It breathed the air of the Talmud from the very inception of its independent history, and, though claiming to be choked by it, it was incapable of living without it. Nevertheless, the story of the study of Rabbanite literature by Karaites, like so many other chapters in the history of the Byzantine branch of the sect, shows in Byzantium a peculiar twist of its own; it forms an interesting corollary of the Karaite-Rabbanite rapprochement stressed all along in the present chapter.

Conceived at first as an ancillary objective only, a medium for the collection of controversial Rabbinic material for the purpose of more effective refutation, knowledge of the Talmud and kindred creations began to be viewed by the Byzantine sectaries as a virtue in itself. In time, the evaluation of that literature, also, initially hostile as a matter of course, had undergone a gradual and profound change.

Surely, the anthropomorphic homilies of the Talmud and the Midrashim did not cease to be a favorite target of Karaite sneers, in Byzantium no less than in the Islamic environment. In fact, the tremendous amount of aggadic yarn, assembled and parodied *ad nauseam* by the twelfth-century Byzantine Yehūdāh Hadassī, superseded in volume and sarcasm all earlier Karaite collections.⁷⁷ It is also to these "abominable things written in the Talmud" that our eleventh-century Tobias ben

⁷⁷ Cf. Hadassī's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, passim, esp. 43d ff., Alphabets 105-124. Scores of anthropomorphic and otherwise objectionable Aggadoth are repeated there in the form of 20 alphabetical *piyyūṭim*.

This anti-talmudic *literary* activity goes back apparently to the late ninth century. Daniel al-Kūmisī was probably the first to point to the Rabbanite anthropomorphic literature. Cf. his *Piṭhrōn Shenēm 'Asar*, 5 (Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 75 f.). In the early tenth century, Kırkisanī still deplored Karaite neglect of talmudic studies; only of late [he says] have some Karaites begun to uncover the "absurdities and contradictions" of the Rabbinic writings. Cf. his *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 29 (Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 348). He himself devoted a chapter to this theme. At the same time, Salman ben Yerūḥam devoted to it the last four chapters of his *Book of the Wars of the Lord*.

Moses alluded in the text to be quoted in the next chapter.⁷⁸ Yet, other fields of talmudic learning seemed to be yielding so much positive, indispensable, and otherwise impeccable material, that by the thirteenth century "most of the Mishnah and the Talmud" was hailed by the Byzantine sectaries as "the pronouncements of our [Karaites] fathers."⁷⁹

Of course, true to accepted fashion, Byzantine Karaite spokesmen would not admit to having introduced a new pattern of thought and attitude with regard to Rabbinic creations. Invoking precedents of the past, they were at pains to stress that their positive approach to the Mishnah and the Talmud was but part and parcel of the customary references that could be easily found in the writings of earlier Karaite masters. Did not the glorious Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah mention Rabbinic dicta in his eleventh-century commentaries? Did not Nissī ben Noah articulate the *obligation* of every Karaite "to study the Mishnah and the Talmud?"⁸⁰

These assertions were as they should be and as they ought to have been expected in the first place. Religious movements of the Middle Ages never confess to being revolutionary; they claim to be just reverting to the olden customs. Accordingly, they keep a list of early authorities always ready so that they might prove the *orthodoxy* and the *antiquity*

⁷⁸ See below, 259, and note 25 there. Tobias adopted, of course, the expression תועבות התלמוד from earlier Karaite polemicists. Cf., for instance, Salman's *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, 108, 111, 113, 124.

⁷⁹ Cf. the statement of Aaron ben Joseph, in the Introduction to his *Mibḥar*, 9a: אני לא אמנע ברובי המצות שלא אוכיר בתוך הביאור מדברי המשנה... רוב משבילי גלותנו עשו ככה... ואין הרב המובהק רבנו ישועה ג"ע... עד שהרב נסי בן גז חיב לבני עמנו ללמוד המשנה והתלמוד. Nissī ben Noah still constitutes one of the unsolved riddles of Karaite chronology. It seems, however, that one may, with a fair degree of probability, date his activity some time between Hadassī (mid-twelfth century) and Aaron ben Joseph (late thirteenth century).

⁸⁰ Cf. *Mibḥar*, *Introd.*, 9a: אוכיר בתוך הביאור מדברי המשנה התעוררתי לזה הענין בראותי את... הרב המובהק רבנו ישועה ג"ע... עד שהרב נסי בן גז חיב לבני עמנו ללמוד המשנה והתלמוד. Nissī ben Noah still constitutes one of the unsolved riddles of Karaite chronology. It seems, however, that one may, with a fair degree of probability, date his activity some time between Hadassī (mid-twelfth century) and Aaron ben Joseph (late thirteenth century).

For the problem of Nissī's chronology see P. F. Frankl, *Hashshahar*, VIII (1876-77), esp. 181 ff. The text of Nissī's injunction is given at the end of the lengthy excerpt published by Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. I, 13.

For the eleventh century, cf. Levi ben Yefeth, Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 15a: רע בי המלמדים והפותרים אספו דברים הרבה אש' הם נמצאים מן המשנה ומן התלמוד לחדיע בי אנחנו. Similarly in Byzantium, *Ex-Lev. Anonymous*, Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 11b: צדיקים לקרות דברי הרבנים.

of their views. Yet, notwithstanding these averments, it is not difficult to discern that the attitude to the Talmud as formulated by Byzantine Karaite ideologists from the thirteenth century on was hardly a continuation of the orthodox Karaite approach. Neither, be it admitted, was it contradictory to that approach. It was simply different. It attacked the problem on a different plane altogether. Far from relinquishing the right and obligation to fight talmudic legislation whenever incompatible with Karaite rules of jurisprudence,⁸¹ it constituted a re-evaluation of the role of the Talmud in the life of the nation. Moreover, it was an outright attempt to rewrite history by claiming a *share* in that role and by extolling Karaite *partnership* in the all-Jewish cultural endeavor of which the Talmud was the most prominent and characteristic expression.

Now, as for the fact that we have mentioned things which are found in the books of our brethren the Rabbanites [says Bashyachi's pupil in the course of quoting Rabbinic material], this should not be taken as adding to their glory. For we do not live, God forbid, from the words of their mouth. [The truth of the matter is that] these are all pronouncements of our own ancestors. . . . For we are partners (*haberim*) with them (i.e., with the Rabbanites) regarding the sayings of the Talmud; all these sayings stem from One Shepherd, [our Master Moses, peace be upon him].⁸²

The Karaites' "new look" at the Talmud and cognate Rabbinical literature was a typically "Byzantine" development, conceivable only in the social and spiritual atmosphere of Byzantine Jewry. The extent to which the Empire's Karaites were indebted to their Rabbanite compatriots in daily practices and in customs unknown to their sectarian brethren under Islām must have necessitated the formulation of a rationale that would somehow assist a sectarian conservative to be at peace with his conscience. The dissenters' pride could hardly acquiesce

⁸¹ *Mibḥar*, 9a: כי רוב המאמרים [= של התלמוד] אמרי אבותינו הם. ולא תחזנו כללם רק מה שאין הכתוב: סרבל וחלוקה עמו ושעומר כנגד הכתוב.

⁸² Cf. Kaleb Afendopolo, in the excerpt from the hitherto unpublished *Pathshegen Kethab had-Dath*, as communicated by A. Danon, "Documents Relating to the History of the Karaites in European Turkey," *JQR* (N.S.), XVII (1926-27), 172 f., No. 12: ואם הזכרנו רברים שהם נמצאים בספרי אבותינו הרבנים, אין תפארת להם זה כי לא מפיחם אנו חיים חלילה כי כלם רברי אבותינו הם. . . . כי אנו חברים עמם [= עם הרבנים] ברבריו [= של התלמוד] וכולם נתנו מרעה אחר. The last clause invoked, of course, Eccl. 12:11. This verse belonged to the standard Karaite thesaurus of biblical quotations (cf. below, note 216 to Chapter VIII). The mark (-) on מרעה shows that some Karaites read into the word the initials of *משה רבינו עליו השלום*; I have translated the passage accordingly. Hadassi, however (in the text quoted in Chapter VIII), explained: אחר והוא ה' אלהיך: (*sic!*).

On this fifteenth-century climax of the trend just described, see my "Elijah Bashyachi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 186 ff., and my Introduction to a critical edition of Afendopolo's *Pathshegen Kethab had-Dath* (prepared on the basis of MSS in the possession of Columbia University, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the British Museum and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem), to be published elsewhere.

to the idea that they might simply confess the inescapable necessity of "borrowing" from the Rabbanites under the prevailing conditions.

Yet, to the impartial observer, the Karaites' endorsement of "most of the talmudic sayings" must have, first and above all, borne proof of the sect's inability to cope with new circumstances by means of its native resources alone. An inevitable consequence of the social and cultural rapprochement between the Karaite sectaries and their Rabbanite neighbors on Byzantine soil, such endorsement was, at the same time, an admission of Karaism's *inherent* weakness. It bared for all to see the indisputable fact that *the purely Karaite lore, as developed by the 'Ananite and post-'Ananite generations in the Muslim East, failed to equip its adherents for independent survival in the western environment.*

ELEVENTH-CENTURY TURNING-POINT

Now, true, the explicit dicta which sealed the process described and interpreted here do not antedate the thirteenth century.⁸³ Developments which have taken place in a period later than that covered by the present volume undoubtedly made the definition of the Karaite stand versus the Talmud a matter of urgency. Especially the forced detachment of the Byzantine branch of the movement from its Palestinian roots, following the destruction of the Jerusalem center by the Crusaders, created a void in the spiritual make-up of the group which accelerated the flow of new sources of influence; such sources were readily available among the sect's Rabbanite neighbors.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it stands to reason that the *beginning* of the process may be dated in the eleventh century, i.e., already in the formative years of Karaite settlement on Byzantine soil. The fact that later generations invoke in this connection the authority of the eleventh-century Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah and fail to cite any earlier source is not without significance.

The idealistic presentation of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah by late Byzantine Karaite writers as the Father of Karaite communities overseas is, of course, unhistoric, insofar as details of Yeshū'ah's own *activity* are

⁸³ The earliest known text reflecting the above-described attitude is that of Aaron ben Joseph who was active in the second half of the thirteenth century. His *Mibḥar* was concluded about 1293.

⁸⁴ For an illustration of the accelerated absorption of Rabbanite customs, following the fall of the Karaite center in Jerusalem, cf. the story of Karaite calendation in Byzantium, Chapter VII, below. The other instances, also cited there, will be treated at greater length in a separate volume which is to deal with Karaite history in Byzantium from the First Crusade on.

concerned.⁸⁵ Yet, their general conception of Yeshū'ah's *period* and of the importance of processes set in motion in his time is, on the whole, correct. It is psychologically well understandable why the later Karaites of Byzantium chose to simplify the rather complicated pattern of events in Karaism's life story and its geographic ramification, and why they attributed to Yeshū'ah personally the solution of all problems and the initiation of all trends that were to appear in the sect from the eleventh century on. This tendency does not detract from the basic accuracy of their general evaluation of that stage in Karaite history.⁸⁶ The eleventh century may with no hesitation be considered a turning-point in the evolution of Karaism and in the history of Karaite Diaspora.

Hence, rather than ascribe the Byzantine Karaite "new look" of the Talmud to Yeshū'ah himself, as does the thirteenth-century Karaite commentator, we may safely place that development in the *general period* of Yeshū'ah's activity. In this connection, the later Byzantine view regarding the Yeshū'ah-Tobias relationship should be recalled again. This view, we remember, which considered Tobias ben Moses a disciple of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah and a disseminator of the latter's doctrine in the Empire, has proven a myth. In reconstructing their early steps on Byzantine soil, later generations unhistorically transferred unto Yeshū'ah, the *last Palestinian leader* of the sect, actions and doctrines which Tobias, their *first native leader*, independently introduced into Byzantine Karaite life.⁸⁷ We shall not go wrong, then, in linking in the present case, too, the evolution of the Byzantine Karaite attitude to the Talmud not merely with the general period of Yeshū'ah, but with the specific policies and concepts of Yeshū'ah's contemporary in Constantinople, Tobias ben Moses. While symptoms of the same trend may have been visible already in eleventh-century Palestine, where both Yeshū'ah and Tobias acquired their education, the actual formulation of the new attitude was, as it seems, Tobias' own contribution to the development of the sectarian community on the Bosphorus.

Indeed, here again Tobias was showing the way to future Byzantine-born generations of Karaites. It was Tobias who, with no hesitation or apology, adopted from Rabbanite authorities certain details of biblical

⁸⁵ Cf. my critique of that presentation in "Elijah Bashyachi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 44 ff., 183 ff.

⁸⁶ See my explanation of the "Yeshū'ah myth" with regard to Byzantium, in the aforementioned "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 63 ff.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

exegesis and preferred them to the prevalent views.⁸⁸ It was he, further, who quoted *bona fide* Rabbinic homilies⁸⁹ and showed a more than average familiarity with the standard works of talmudic Judaism.⁹⁰ Tobias also corresponded with one or two Rabbanite scholars of note⁹¹ and, being much younger than his correspondents, could not fail to be influenced by the latter's scholastic expositions.⁹² Hardly could he have foreseen that this natural gravitation of the inexperienced Karaite communities and of their young leadership in Byzantium toward the pattern of cultural activity prevalent among their Rabbanite neighbors would eventually lead to a partial surrender of basic Karaite values.

THE WARNING

As it happened, however, this process of adjustment had its dangers. The demarcation line between the two branches of Judaism struggling under the same conditions tended to wear quite thin at times. In the eyes of none-too-scrupulous, or ignorant, members of the young Karaite community, this line might eventually be obliterated altogether.

Hence, the exhortation uttered by an anonymous Byzantine Karaite conservative sounded a timely warning.⁹³ In his exegetic compilation,

⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., the fragment published by Poznański, *JQR* (O.S.), VIII (1895-96), 697 f. True, in the end Tobias is inclined to the usual Karaite interpretation.

⁸⁹ See about it in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," esp. note 24.

⁹⁰ This fact was already stressed by Poznański in his brief biographical sketch of "Tobias ben Moses" (Hebrew), *Oṣar Yisrael*, V, 13b. It is worth noting in this connection that Tobias consciously selected a talmudic expression קפת הרוכלים for the title of his great encyclopedic project. See on it below, note 219 to Chapter VIII.

⁹¹ For Tobias' exchange of letters with the Rabbanite *Rōsh hap-Perek* Peraḥ ben Mūmal (or Muammil), see my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," and the brief summary above, 43 f., 49 ff. In his letter to Peraḥ (which, incidentally, came in reply to the latter's earlier communication), Tobias mentions another Rabbanite worthy to whom he sends regards. It is reasonable to suppose that Tobias was in correspondence with the other scholar, also.

⁹² Peraḥ appears already in 1018 C.E. among the signatories of a court-writ preserved in the Genizah (cf. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 174, note 1). At that time Tobias probably had not reached yet the age of ten. The difference of age between Tobias and his correspondents is also evident from the general style of the epistle.

⁹³ The conservative in question was the author of the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymus*, listed above, 29, note 8, and quoted earlier in this chapter. See the excerpts and discussion in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē*, App. VII, 71 ff.

The identity of the author is still open to question. Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. VII, 78 ff., as well as Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, 6 ff., and Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 136, note 7, were mistaken in identifying this scholar with the Palestinian Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah. The Commentary, as we have it, is definitely a Byzantine

composed in 1088 C.E.⁹⁴ (i.e., some time after Tobias' death), the Byzantine commentator cautions his coreligionists:

Know, then, that the Rabbanites allow two brothers to marry two sisters . . . , and they practice many things that are neither identical with, nor similar to, Karaite observances but rather alien to them; which goes to prove that their custom has led them astray onto an unpaved road. May God enlighten our own eyes in the path of truth, Amen.⁹⁵

That some Karaites did in fact overstep the boundaries of constructive adjustment and imitated the Rabbanites to the point of self-effacement, seems to follow from a bitter indictment voiced by the same writer against his fellow Karaites. Expounding a verse of the Psalms [129:3] in the familiar medieval vein of translating biblical phrases into allusions to contemporary events, the anonymous Byzantine author emphasizes the long period of Roman (by then: East Roman=Byzantine) domination over the Jews. The longest domination it was [he says] in the history of the Jewish people—a people which has weathered many a storm in the course of ages and outlived many a despotic rule. Indeed, it has been not only the longest but also the hardest dominion, “and we are under its hand like those ploughing beasts, and it [our nation?] is enwrapped in grief because of torture.”⁹⁶

compilation. See on it Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 65 f., §28. Cf., nevertheless, Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshūb*, II, 83a-b, § 50, and 127a, § 4, where Assaf concurs with Pinsker's view.

A. Geiger was probably the first to recognize the Byzantine origin of the Commentary, but incorrectly identified its author with Jacob ben Reuben, the scholar otherwise known from his *Sefer ha-'Osher*. Cf. Geiger's aforementioned review-article in *Oṣar Nehmad*, IV (1863), 25 f., note. A closer study of the work makes it clear beyond doubt that the author was active *after* both the Palestinian Yeshū'ah and the Byzantine Tobias ben Moses, although he never mentions them by name. This was already noted by Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 66, note 1.

As for the available excerpts of the work, Pinsker, unfortunately, printed merely a selection prepared for him by Abraham Firkowicz from the St. Petersburg MS. This selection does not necessarily cover all the points of interest that a modern student of history would be searching for. In the present quotations the printed text was checked against and supplemented from the Leiden MS of the work (Warner No. 3, Cod. Or. 4741), a microfilm copy of which is in my possession.

⁹⁴ The date of the book can indirectly be inferred from the text. More than once the author recalls the lapse of 1020 years since the Roman subjugation of Israel and of 480 years since the rise of Islām. Cf., e.g., the quotation in note 96, below.

⁹⁵ Cf. the *Ex.-Lev. Anonymous*, Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 352b f. (also in Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. VII, 75): ויש להם דברים הרבה שאינם . . . רוצים שתי אחיות לשני אחים . . . לא שוים ולא דומים כ"א [= כי אם] רחוקים, להודיע כי מנהגם הוציאם לדרך לא סלולה. והאלהים יאיר לעינינו בדרך האמת אמן למען תדע כי דרכיהם [= של הרבנים] מעוקלות. ולא יוציאום למישור כי אם לכשלון . . . למען תדע שכל אלה הדברים לא מדברי יי' לכן יצאו אורחותיהם עקשים ונלוזים במטלותם

⁹⁶ Cf. Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. VII, 75, and Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 441a-b.

And yet [the Byzantine commentator warns his compatriots], the true danger to the Karaite cause is lurking from within. It lies in the sect's complacency and indiscriminate absorption of Rabbanite concepts and practices. Actualizing the biblical admonition in Leviticus, he exclaims:

"And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in the lands of your enemies" (Lev. 26:39)—by that the Karaites are meant, for the majority among them pay just lip-service to the fact that theirs is the true creed but fail to practice it, and so they transgress the commandments and shall pine away in their iniquity. Now, the Scriptures say, too, "And also in the iniquities of their fathers" (*ibid.*)—i.e., the religion of the Traditionists [= Rabbanites] who fix intercalation and the leap-year cycle by calculation and say, 'This is a tradition we received from our fathers.'

And by stating, "With them shall they pine away" (*ibid.*), the Scriptures refer to the ones [that is, the Karaites] who are now with them, i.e., with those who maintain they received traditions from their fathers, and now they are with them in these practices; they will pine away in the protracted exile.⁹⁷

IN PRAISE OF LEARNING

For ignorance and complacency were the greatest enemies of a community which was pressured by external circumstances into adjustment

The Leiden version differs to some extent from the Firkowicz MS underlying the excerpt printed by Pinsker. These variants were already noted and discussed by Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, 6 f., and by Geiger, in Blumenfeld's *Oṣar Neḥmad*, IV (1863), 25 f., note. They will be marked off in the present quotation by brackets: ואמר חרשו חורשים, הוא ד' מלכות, בבל וכשדים. ומדי ופרס. ויזין ומוקרון. וישמעאל ואדום. ואמר האריכו למעניהם. כי האריכו ישראל בעבורתם שנים הרבה. ממלכות למלכות מנבוכדנצר שלטה [כי נבוכדנצר מלך] שבעים שנה ופרטיים ק"פ [ג"ח]. ואחריהם יונים קמ"ה ואחריהם קמו ארומים אחים [ואחריהם יוניים אשר קמו אדומים מהם]. ועליהם אמר אכלה ומרקה וגו' [ושארה ברגלה רפטה]. ומלכים עד עתה אלף וכ' שנים [אלף שנים] לכן אמר האריכו למעניהם. ומן התחברות מלכות ישמעאל [ומלכות ישמעאל מלכה] עד עתה ח"פ שנה [ש"פ]. ואנחנו חתח ידיהם וכי' [כמו בהמות אשר יחרשו והיא מהעטסת בעיני]

For all we know, the last clause reproduced in brackets from the Leiden MS may very well be extant in the Firkowicz MS also; the latter seems on the whole to be superior to that in the Leiden University Library. However, when preparing the selection for Pinsker, Firkowicz probably decided to omit the sentence and conveniently dismissed it with an "etc." Surely, there was no point, as far as he was concerned, in comparing the position of the Karaites in the Orthodox Christian Empire to that of "ploughing beasts." After all, nineteenth-century Russian Karaism was in the midst of a political romance with the Czarist government which claimed to be the legitimate heir of imperial Byzantine authority.

The continuation of the paragraph in the Leiden MS is all in a messianic vein, which brings into even sharper relief the complaint voiced in the sentence quoted last. The Firkowicz-Pinsker selection does not mention the messianic character of that text either.

The part which contains the dates of the Roman and Muslim dominations, respectively, was later incorporated by Yefeth ben Ṣa'ir into his Commentary on the Pentateuch. See the excerpt in Pinsker's "Mittheilungen," *Der Orient*, XII (1851), 740, note 4.

A critical edition (even a partial one) of the hitherto unpublished *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous* would greatly enhance our knowledge of Karaite biblical exegesis and of Byzantine Karaism in general.

⁹⁷ Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 452a, differs here from the selection based on the

and compromise. With the increasing urgency of the economic struggle under the new and fluid conditions, and with the weakening of traditional ties and institutions, the need for realism could easily turn into opportunism, and adjustment could before long end in utter assimilation.

The danger of imitating the Rabbanites indiscriminately, both in their commendable traits and ways of behavior and in those practices which Karaite tradition considered undesirable, loomed large before the eyes of responsible leaders. Sheer ignorance on the part of the settlers who were now uprooted from the sources of their original, spiritual and religious, experience made this danger increasingly real. An intensive educational drive was then in order, one that could make the people face the problems of the hour by acquiring the knowledge prerequisite for honest searching of ways and for wise decisions.

Firkowicz MS and printed in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē*. The fact that the printed version concludes each excerpt with an "etc." only, without indicating the extent of editorial omissions, makes the comparison difficult indeed. Thus, there is no way of checking whether the text available in the Leiden MS and missing in Pinsker's edition was deliberately left out by the editor or did not exist in the Russian MS in the first place.

There is, however, a very important line, printed in *Likḳūṭē*, which is simply missing in the Leiden version. The clause thereafter is also corrupt in the latter. For this reason the Pinsker edition was preferred here, so far as the English translation is concerned; though abridged, it is based on a text superior throughout.

The Hebrew version, reproduced in the present note, forms, for the sake of completeness, a combination of both the Firkowicz and the Leiden MSS. The sections omitted by Pinsker (or Firkowicz) from the Russian MS are supplied here on the basis of the Leiden copy and put in brackets, while those passages that are missing in the Leiden MS, yet are given by Pinsker, will be stressed here through scattered lettering: ואמר והנשארים בכם ימקו וגו' [כולם יהיו נמקים בעונם וחלקם בבי' חלקים. יע' אמר בא' מהם ימקו בעונם. והם החלק הא' אשר יצאו מדת הקבלה והוא לא נעשה אלא מה שחייבה התורה וההקש]. והם הקראים אשר רובם יאמרו בפיהם ואינם עושים כי דתם הוא אמת. לכן יעברו למצות ויהיו נמקים בעונם. ואמר ואף בעונות אבותם. הוא דת הקבלה שיעשו עבור ומחזור ויאמרו זה קבלה לנו מן אבות וכו' [ויאמרו דברים אשר אין להם עיקר מן התורה. לכן אמר אבותם. ואמר עוונות. כי יש לרבנים עוונות רבות. ואמר בקראים עונם בלשון יחיד כי יעשו עון א' המעכב להם הישועה. ועל הרבנים אמרו אבותינו חטאו ואינם ואנחנו עונותיהם סבלנו. יודו בפיהם בטי' באב. כי עונות אבותינו ודתם קיבלנו וסבלנו. ולא יסור זה מהם עד שירבו המשכילים ויזהירום שנא' ומשכילי עם יבינו לרבים. וגלו עליהם רבי' כחל. ועליהם אמר אותם סרתם מן הדרך וגו'; ובאלה אמר ישוטטו רבים ותרבה הדעת. ולולי לא אמר אחריי אתם ימקו הייתי פותר כולם על חלק אחד. כי ימקו בעונם ובעון אבותם. וכאשר אמר בתחלה ימקו. ושב עוד ואמר ואף בעונות אבותם אתם ימקו. ידעתי כי היו על חלק אחד. והבי' על עם אחר]. ואמר אתם ימקו. מענהו אשר קבלום מאבותיהם ועתה הם עמם בהם ימקו בארך הגלות.

The gist of the section omitted by Firkowicz and given here from the Leiden MS is that the sin of the Karaites is less grave than that of the Rabbanites. Yet, their following the Rabbanite customs delays the salvation to which they would otherwise be entitled. Nevertheless, the author concludes his exhortation on a hopeful note and predicts redemption of both branches of Jewry. The condition for that future bliss is their sincere and wholehearted repentance. Cf. Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 452a, (the text is not given in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē*): ואמר והודו את עון אבותם, בזה הפסוק קיבץ לב': הקהילות. כי אמר עונם. ואמר ועון אבותם. כי בולם מתודים ואומרים חטאנו צורינו סלח לנו יוצרינו. ולו היה זה הודו בכל לב היינו רצויים לפני יי'

Exaltation of knowledge and the stress of the personal responsibility of each individual to acquire it were standard slogans in Karaism even before the aforementioned victory of rationalism and individualism in the latter part of the tenth century. The scholastic ideal which the late tenth- and the eleventh-century Palestinian masters succeeded in inculcating into the minds of their Byzantine disciples was based both on the old Jewish type of *talmīd ḥakham*, largely modeled after the talmudic scholar in the Rabbanite academies,⁹⁸ and on the rationalistic Islamic *mujtahid*, the “seeker [of truth]” and “investigator” (*ba'al ha-hippūs*).⁹⁹ Still, the impression is gained that in Byzantium these properties were hailed not merely as praiseworthy signs of purely *academic* zeal. They appear there to be imbued with such a degree of *practical* urgency that their true meaning can be explained only in the context of the special conditions with which the young sectarian camp was confronted on the unfamiliar ground of the Byzantine Empire.

God, Exalted be He, imposed on us the obligation of study [Tobias ben Moses importunes his coreligionists], that we may learn his Torah and store it in our heart *καὶ ἵνα κατακαταθήσωμεν*, for the Torah is true. And thus we shall know to perform the commands therein, and we shall be careful to avoid doing what should not be done. Woe to him who wastes and perverts knowledge or puts himself in a position in which he is deprived of Torah—woe to him in this world and in the world to come, for his sin is greater than that of a man who studied and erred.¹⁰⁰

Education [Tobias reminds his flock] is a personal responsibility, and lack of schooling during the person's childhood does not exempt the adult from the duty of study.¹⁰¹ No less dangerous than ignorance itself is the foolish notion of the complacent ignorant that

⁹⁸ No wonder the Karaite academy of Joseph ben Noah in late tenth-century Jerusalem was organized according to the Rabbanite pattern. Cf. on it “Ibn al-Hiti's Chronicle of Karaite Doctors,” edited by G. Margoliouth, *JQR* (O.S.), IX (1897), esp. 433 (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 232, §11). On ‘Anan's Talmud-minded ideal of study, see Ben-Sasson's remarks in *Zion*, XV (1950), 43 f.

⁹⁹ For a definition of the *mujtahid* see Schacht, *Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*, 99. On *ijtihād* in Karaism see recently Zucker, in his already-cited Hebrew essay in *Sura*, II (1955–56), 325. Cf. also the same expression in the excerpt from Salman ben Yerūḥam, as quoted above, 54, note 72, and my general comments earlier in this chapter, 209 f.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Oṣar Nehmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 43a–b. The text (including that in the next three notes) was published earlier by Poznański, “Anan et ses écrits,” *REJ*, XLIV, 186 f., and differs from my reading to a negligible extent only: a negligible extent only: בי יי יה"ש חייב עלינו שלמדור תורתנו ונעצור אותה בלבנו קינקטקטישומין כי היא אמת ונעשה הצווים אש' עליה ונודח מאשר לא יתכן לעשות. ומי שיפסיד וישחית הלמדור ויניח עצמו בלא תורה ארי לו בעולם הזה וארי לו בעו' הבא כי עונו גדול יותר מאש' למדור ושהג בעת (?) בבלי דעת או שגה בשבטש

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: דערו אחינו כי מי שיעזוב עצמו מללמדור תורת יי' ויחודר אש' הוא תוב על כל בעל דעת. ושגמרה דעתו ואין לו תואנה שיתאונן לפני יוצרו ולא פתחון פה שיא' בי לא הייתי אוכל. או כי היה עלי עול כבד או אבי לא למדני. כל אלה לא יועילו לו ביום יקימו מקברו לשלם כל אדם מעברו

Israel is indestructible, whatever its behavior.¹⁰² Indeed, the ignorant are easy prey for Rabbanite sinners who entice the nation into transgressions and lull it into a false sense of security and a faulty mode of life.¹⁰³

COMING TO TERMS WITH LIFE

And yet, despite the fiery outcries of alarmed leaders, intelligent adjustments had to be made. Indeed, as we have seen, the self-same Tobias ben Moses, who so eloquently pleaded against assimilation and hurled threats of hell-fire against those who blindly followed the Rabbanites, was the first to lead his flock on a path of compromise and of adjustment to new conditions.

Naturally, the decisive modifications in ideological outlook and in the sect's own appraisal of its historic position in a changing world were still to come after the death of Tobias ben Moses and his colleagues. It was then that, to the surprise and ultimate detriment of Byzantium, powerful external forces staged what Western Christianity termed "the Crusades." The Karaite organization, geared to unswerving allegiance to the sectarian spiritual capital in Jerusalem and now thrown off balance with the destruction of that capital in 1099, had to introduce basic reforms of practice and orientation in a search for a *modus vivendi* in a changed world. Even greater reforms were eventually to force their way to the surface in the fifteenth century, again under the impact of tremendous changes on the international scene. But the trend as such, an original contribution of the Byzantine branch of the sect to the evolution of Karaism, was foreshadowed already in the first cautious steps of the eleventh-century leaders. Notwithstanding the occasional

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: אוי לרשעים הקופאים על שמריהם או לבורים שמעשיהם אינם מעשים ואין שם סליחה ומחילה. ואל ישען ארם ויאמ' כי יי' רחום וחנון הוא ומה יועיל לו אם ישליכנו בגיהנם הוא מרחם על בריותיו וירחם עלי כי אני מן ברואיו. ואל ישען ברברי הכסילים הברערים אש' יאמ' כי חולעת יעקב לא יבוא בגיהנם. תתלה וראש הם אם [צ"ל: שם] יהיו אש' אמ' זה, כי חסאו הברערים והכשילו רבים מרכיהם הפוחתים.

¹⁰³ Cf. the immediate continuation of the previous text, *ibid.*: מדבריהם הפוחתים. ופתחו דרך לפעם לאכול ולשתות ולעשות כל תועבה והתירו להם המאכלות הטמאות והערוות האסורות... אוי להם כי יבאו מתחת כנפי יי' והציאו והדיתו את יש[ראל] כשקרונם בכזבם את עמי שומעי כזב וייבעו ברברי פחיתים... אוי להם אלה ואלה, על מי ינוסו ואנה יעזבו חרפתם. אחי החרה ואל תכשלו במרצתם אחי בני יש[ראל] שימו לבבכם אל יי' והגורו מהלך אחרי דתם. כי טח מראות עיניהם: And again, on the hitherto unpublished fol. 27b: מהשכיל לבתם... ואמ' אל תשקצו את נפשותיכם [ויקר' י"א מג] והם אוכלים כל גבלה ושקץ הלא על כמה מצוות עוברים האומרים בזה. ולו היה להם: fol. 5a: דעת במצות יי' ותורתו לא היו מדברים כמ' אלה. אבל צופני עורים כלם כי לא ידעו דרך יי' והתעו ליש[ראל] וילכו אחריהם כאש' הלכו אחרי ירבעם ב"ג [- כן נבט], ואוי ההולכים אחריהם ואחר מחשבותם, שוד ושבר במסלותם, נתיבותיהם עקשו מאר. ואוי מי שידחה עולם הזה בעה"ב [צ"ל: עולם הבא בעולם הזה]. ואוי מי שידחה כאב מעט ככאב הרבה למען תגלה והשררה. ואנה יעזבו כבודם הברערים ועל מי ינוסו לעזרה.

relapses into conservatism and even asceticism, there is a steady path leading from Tobias ben Moses to Elijah Bashyachi. The almost imperceptible adjustments of the eleventh century led ultimately to the sweeping innovations introduced four centuries later, when, against the opposition of the whole Karaite East which was unaware of the problems with which Byzantine Karaism was confronted, candles were lit for the first time on Friday evenings in Karaite homes on the Bosphorus. The Byzantine sectaries were welcoming the Holy Sabbath in the Rabbanite fashion!¹⁰⁴

Thus toppled the wall of darkness which, literally speaking, used to surround the Karaite dwellings on the eve of the Lord's day and to isolate the sectaries from their Rabbanite brethren. It did not fall of itself nor by accident. It was pulled down deliberately by consistent action of Byzantine Karaite leadership—the climax of four centuries of mutual borrowing and legal reformulation, the fulfillment of a chain of pathetic efforts to come to terms with the law. This age-long process of coming to terms with a law that had evolved under conditions different from those in which its Byzantine followers lived ended in bending the law to come to terms with life.

¹⁰⁴ The so to speak revolutionary innovation, introduced into Byzantino-Turkish Karaism in the fifteenth century, of lighting Sabbath candles on Friday evenings, is discussed by Elijah Bashyachi in his *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XX, 52d ff., and passim. See also above, 235, concerning Bashyachi's efforts to read into the writings of earlier Karaite legislators the tendency toward the same reform.

The innovation was accepted by the Karaite communities in the Crimea, in Poland and Lithuania. It was, however, persistently opposed for many centuries by the eastern branch of the sect. Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 447, 464, 505, 1160 ff., 1420; the additional texts in *Dod Mordecai*, 15a; Gurland's *Ginzē Yisrael*, III, 29 ff.; and Neubauer's *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 65 f., 122 f. Cf. also my Hebrew "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 58 f., note 47.

Other innovations of that period included the beginning of the annual cycle of Pentateuch reading in the synagogue in the month of Tishri, in accord with the Rabbanites, replacing the former Karaite custom to open the cycle in the month of Nisan; arrangement of astronomical tables of *mōladoth* to assist in fixing the first day of the month; introduction of Sephardi Rabbanite cantillation; regulation of the system of prayers and the inclusion of Rabbanite liturgical poetry in it; acceptance of Rabbanite-patterned ritual fringes (*šīšīth*); the use of Rabbanite models for a whole series of benedictions for different occasions; etc. Not all reforms were equally successful; some did not survive the generation of a Bashyachi or of his pupil Afendopolo. Of them all, however, the Sabbath reform was, at least outwardly, the most impressive. Cf. my brief summary in *Ensiġklopedyah 'Ivriith*, IX, 960 ff., s.v. "Bashyachi."

WIDENING THE CIRCLE

THE INTERPENETRATION of ideas and customs, stemming from the inevitable contact between groups of people who live alongside each other, is, of course, a two-way street; thus, we may also assume that the processes of fraternization and of conscious or inadvertent borrowing within Byzantine Jewry worked in both directions. The above-described Rabbanite influence on Karaite legislation and practice in Byzantium could not have failed to be accompanied conversely by a lesser or greater impact of Karaite ways on the mode of life of Byzantine Rabbanites. It is only natural to suppose that Karaite coloring must have gradually tinged some observances and customs of the Rabbanite population in the Empire, much the same way as it did elsewhere.¹

KARAITE INROADS

Indeed, already in the late tenth century the Karaite Sahl ben Maṣliḥ boasted of the fact that several Rabbanites in Palestine have adopted major Karaite practices.²

Now, should someone say [argues Sahl with his Rabbanite correspondent], "Behold, our brethren, the disciples of the Rabbanites on the Holy Mount [= Jerusalem] and

¹ See on the problem, in general, A. Marmorstein's interesting, though somewhat undisciplined, survey of the "Spuren karäischen Einflusses in der gaonäischen Halacha," *Festschrift A. Schwarz*, 455 ff.; S. W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), V, 281 ff.

² Cf. his *Epistle to Jacob ben Samuel*, in Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē Qadmoniyoth*, App. III, 33 (the English version by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 117 f., §15, is extremely abridged): ואם יאמר אדם הנה אחינו חלמידי הרבנים בהר הקדש ובכרמלה [=וברמלה] רחוקים מן המעשים האלה, חייב אהה לדעת באמת כי הם כדרכי חלמידי החורה וכמעשי בני מקרא עשו ומהם למדו. ויש מהם רבים שלא יאכלו בשר צאן ובקר בירושלים וטהרו אה פיהם מכל מאכל אסור, וגם מהם אשר לא יאכלו מיד טבחיהם ולא יקחו שמן משמנם כי אם מזה הברור מן התולעים. ולא יאכלו ממחנקם ומכל מאכלותיהם, ולא יגעו אל המחים ולא יטמאו בכל הסמאות. וכל זה להם בחסדי האל מלמוד יראי ה' ותוכוחם ואזהרותיהם, ולא זה בלבד כי אם לא יקחו בה אה ולא בת אחות ולא בת אשת האב ויגדו מכל העריות האסורות אשר אסרום חכמי בני מקרא יצ"ו. . . והם עושים בעזרת שדי אה המועדים שני ימים, יום אחד בראיח הירח ויום אחד כאשר היו עושים לפנים, ועם כל זה הם חוקרים ודורשים. ויש מהם שהאיר השם עיניהם והניחו חשבון העבור.

in Ramlah, are far removed from such [abominable] deeds,³ then you must really know that they walk the path of the [Karaites] students of Torah and do as the Karaites do; indeed, they have learned it from the latter. Thus, there are many of them who [following the Karaites] eat no meat of sheep and cattle in Jerusalem,⁴ and keep their mouths clean of every unclean food. . . .⁵ And they do not touch the dead and do not become defiled by any of the impurities.⁶

Now, they arrived at all that by the grace of God and through learning from the God-fearing [Karaites], from their chastisements and admonitions. And not that alone, but they also refrain from marrying a daughter of one's mother [from another marriage] and a daughter of one's sister and a daughter of the wife of one's father, and they refrain from all the prohibited incestuous unions which the Karaite scholars (may their Rock guard them) have proclaimed as forbidden. . . . Further, with God's help, they celebrate the festivals for two days—one day according to lunar observation [in the Karaite fashion], and one day in consonance with their former [Rabbanite] custom. And they still continue to search and investigate,⁷ and, indeed, there are some among them whose eyes God has ultimately enlightened so that they have forsaken the calculation of leap-years.⁸

Now, true, this statement, coming from a zealous missionary of Karaism, does not impress the reader as entirely free of partisan enthusiasm. Not only may some of the enumerated successes have been somewhat exaggerated, but, even if basically true, they were not necessarily the result of Karaite propaganda, notwithstanding Sahl's claims to this effect. The pietistic ways may have been either mirroring some ancient Palestinian Halakhah or *minhag* [i.e., custom], unrecorded in the extant Rabbinic literature,⁹ or reflecting revivalist trends within

³ I.e., those deplored in the earlier paragraphs of the *Epistle* as typically Rabbanite.

⁴ This prohibition was taken over by the Karaites from earlier sectarians and from the early Rabbanite "Mourners of Zion."

⁵ Here follows a description of food considered legally "unclean," whether because of actual uncleanness or vermin, or because of its having been prepared by Gentiles.

⁶ Karaite reticence about getting defiled by contact with a corpse constituted a major problem, whenever the need arose for reconciling it with the duty of burying the dead. Applying in the Diaspora the biblical laws of *tūme'ath meth* [= impurity incurred by contact with a dead body] as rigidly as in pre-exilic Palestinian Jewry, the Karaites would shirk even the obligation of helping in the burial of their own coreligionists. For the resulting late developments in Lithuania, see Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 593n., 759 f. For the Karaite laws of impurity relating to dead bodies, cf. Bashyachi's *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Tūme'ah we-Ṭaharah*, Chps. XVIII–XXII, 132d ff. On the unsuccessful attempt by the fourteenth-century Israel al-Maghribī to abolish the law, see Mann, *op. cit.*, 71 f.

⁷ Cf. Sahl's exhortation with regard to the believer's duty of "searching and investigating," as quoted above, 37, note 27, 216 f., note 24, 221, note 31, and chosen as motto for our present volume.

⁸ See on this problem, below, 271 ff., and, more fully, in Chapter VII.

⁹ Cf. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 281. On "The Persistence of Rejected Customs in Palestine," see L. Finkelstein's stimulating inquiry under that title, *JQR* (N. S.), XXIX (1938–39), 179 ff., esp. 184 f.; and S. Lieberman(n), *Shkiin*, esp. 21 f.

Rabbanite Jewry, contemporaneous with (but not necessarily dependent on) the Palestinian Karaite movement.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Sahl's statement assumes a different dimension when added to the fact that even great *Rabbanite* leaders could not on different occasions deny that their own communities had been affected. A complaint to this effect was voiced, for example, by no less a figure than Maimonides with regard to twelfth-century Egypt. It seems that Rabbanite women there preferred to perform their ritualistic ablutions in a way resembling that of their Karaite sisters rather than in conformity with talmudic law. The Maimonidean admonition can certainly not be dismissed as conventional moralizing only, since it was actually accompanied by a legal enactment designed to remedy the situation.¹¹

Paradoxically, Karaite influence may perhaps claim some share in the pietistic proposals which the son of Maimonides advocated in the early thirteenth century.¹² Indeed, those contemporaries of Abraham Maimuni who objected to such practices as prostrations, which he endeavored to introduce into synagogue ceremonial, were quick to decry the marked

¹⁰ J. L. Teicher suggested a reappraisal of Sahl's statement in the light of the recent finds in the Judean Desert. Cf. his "The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish-Christian Sect of Ebionites," *JJS*, II (1951), esp. 87 ff. Not that Teicher doubts the pietist revival among the Palestinian Rabbanites of the tenth century, as reported by Sahl. This revival, paralleling that in the Karaite camp, was real. It was, however, a movement stimulated by ancient scrolls found in the caves near the Dead Sea in the late eighth century. In these manuscripts, the discovery of which was reported by the Katholikos Timothy to his colleague, the Metropolitan of Elam, a pious mode of life was advocated. Teicher would even link the famous Saadyah-Ben Meir controversy to the find of Zadokite literature in the caves.

Indeed, as already noted in the Introduction to the present study (p. 20), the view that these cave discoveries, reported in 801 C.E., left an indelible imprint on *Karaite* thinking of the ninth and tenth centuries has gained many supporters among the students of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Cf. O. Eissfeldt, "Der Anlass zur Entdeckung der Höhle und ihr ähnliche Vorgänge aus älterer Zeit," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXIX (1949), 597 f.; P. Kahle's comments on "The Age of the Scrolls," *VT*, I, (1951), 44 ff.; *idem*, *Die hebräischen Handschriften aus der Höhle*, 60; S. Lieberman, "Light on the Cave Scrolls from Rabbinic Sources," *PAAR*, XX (1951), esp. 402 f. However, Teicher's extension of that theory, to include the *Rabbanites*, too, has not met so far with widespread approval. For a similar theory with regard to the *Mishawites*, cf. S. Talmon, *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV (1958), 194, note 82; see below, Chapter VIII, note 62.

¹¹ See the expression ונתנו מנהג מינות, or [לפי אמונת המינים], in I. Friedländer's "Der arabische Original der anti-karäischen Verordnung des Maimonides," *MGWJ*, LIII (1909), 476 (Arabic), and 481 (Hebrew). Cf. *Teshuboth ha-RaMBaM* (ed. A. Freimann), 91 ff., No. 97 (Hebrew version only).

¹² See on it N. Wieder's important essay analyzing the *Islamic Influences on the Jewish Worship*, esp. 54 ff., 60 f.

Islamic and Karaite slant of these reforms.¹³ While Maimuni and his pietist colleagues would (quite obviously and, no doubt, quite sincerely) refuse to admit that they succumbed to non-Jewish or sectarian *influence*, they, nevertheless, could hardly deny the close *resemblance* between the changes they favored and some standard observances in the Karaite house of worship. They argued, however, that, unlike the aforementioned *late* Karaite "innovations" in the field of ritual purity, whose penetration into Egyptian Rabbinism was deplored by Abraham's father, the projected demonstrations of piety merely reverted to more *ancient* practices which antedated the appearance of Karaism.¹⁴ To be sure, the assertions of pietists and critics alike were basically correct. For, as already pointed out on several occasions in this volume, early Karaism drew many of its elements from discarded layers of ancient, to a large extent pietistic Palestinian Halakhah or custom.¹⁵ On the other hand, it is questionable whether the thirteenth-century Rabbanite pietistic revival in Egypt went back directly to the same old stratum of Palestinian-inspired—partly superseded, partly unrecorded—lore. Rather, it was quickened by stimuli of the Islamic environment and by the practical example of contemporary Karaite neighbors.¹⁶

Somewhat similar symptoms of Karaite impact on Rabbinic observances are signaled from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Byzantium. "All the communities of Romania," i.e., of the Byzantine provinces, were, according to the early thirteenth-century Isaiah of Trani, emulating Karaite custom and neglecting the traditional provisions of ritual purity.¹⁷ Modern observers detected also traces of a definite influence of

¹³ Wieder, *op. cit.*, 54, and the Arabic text there, 89, § 4. Characteristically, among Maimuni's opponents was also "one of the most famous scholars of Byzantium" (*min mashāhir talmidē ḥakhamīm ar-Rūm*). Abraham does not give the name of that Byzantine Rabbanite leader.

¹⁴ Wieder, *op. cit.*, 55 f.

¹⁵ See above, 253, and note 9 there.

¹⁶ It is, of course, beyond the scope of these remarks to dwell on the *broader*, ideological and philosophical, aspects of Abraham's pietism nor to draw any analogy between his movement and the contemporaneous pietistic revival in other regions. Only the practical Karaite aspect therein, whatever its *relative* role in the general make-up of Abraham's doctrine, is of relevance in this connection.

On another pietistic Karaite practice that has penetrated Rabbinic worship—standing up all night on Yōm Kippūr—see Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 283.

¹⁷ Cf. S. Schechter's text of Isaiah of Trani, in "Notes on the Hebrew MSS in the University Library at Cambridge (I)," *JQR* (O.S.), IV (1891–92), esp. 99 f. More of Isaiah's anti-Karaite admonitions will be covered in a future volume which is to deal with the Byzantine Karaite story from the end of the eleventh century on. Cf., provisionally, Starr, *Romania*, 16 ff., esp. 19, and the sources cited in the notes thereto.

the Karaite law of inheritance on the legal practice of the Byzantine Rabbanite population in that period. Contrary to the Rabbinic principle and in obvious imitation of Karaite procedure, the Byzantine Rabbanites, too, allowed a married woman to retain full title to her dowry and deprived the husband from inheriting it.¹⁸

Now, all the above instances from Egypt and from the Byzantine territories belong to the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, i.e., to a period later than that covered by the present study. However, as we shall see presently, a similar state of affairs can indirectly be inferred as having obtained also in eleventh-century Byzantium.

EMOTIONAL APPEAL

It is a matter of general concurrence that the Rabbanite exposition of Scripture in Byzantium shows a homiletical rather than rationalistic slant. This fact was already noted by contemporary Rabbanite authorities outside the Empire. An Ibn Ezra or a Maimonides did not spare disparaging remarks with regard to this characteristic predilection of their Byzantine coreligionists.¹⁹

For the purpose of our inquiry, however, the trend toward homiletical exegesis, prevalent among the Rabbanites in Byzantium, is more than of purely scholarly interest. While undoubtedly revealing the *literary* preferences of the average Jew in the Empire, it also reflects a readier reponsiveness on his part to *practical* appeals of an emotional nature. Thus, it stands to reason that certain impressive demonstrations of piety by the new Karaite arrivals in Byzantium and by their descendants were apt to attract the attention of the average Rabbanite Jew more than the dialectical intricacies of Karaite rational proofs. On the one hand,

¹⁸ See S. Assaf, "On the Family Life of the Jews of Byzantium" (Hebrew), *Sefer hay-Yöbel li-Profesör S. Krauss*, 174 f., and Starr's *Romania*, 19.

¹⁹ See the derogatory statement by Abraham ibn Ezra, in the Introduction to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch* appended to many editions of the Jewish Bible (*editio princeps*, Naples, 1488], 2b): וְהַדָּרֵךְ הַרְבִּיעִית קְרוּבָה אֶל הַנְּקוּדָה: וְרַדְפוּ אַחֲרֶיהָ אַגְדָּה (v. l.): אַגְדָּה; rather: אחרי האגדה). וְזֶה דֶרֶךְ הַחֲכָמִים. בְּאַרְצוֹת יוֹנִים וְאַדְוִיָּמִים. שֶׁלֹּא יִבְטְאוּ אֶל מִשְׁקַל מֵאוֹזִים. רַק יִסְמְכוּ עַל דֶּרֶשׁ בְּלִקָּה טוֹב וְאוֹר עֵינַיִם. וְאַחַר שִׁמְצָאוּ בְּסַפְרֵי הַקְּדוּמוֹנִים. וְלִמָּה יִגְעוּ לִכְתֹּבם אֱלֹה הַחֲחֲרוּגִי. Cf. also the English version in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 215, No. 164.

Similarly, cf. the deprecating comment by Maimonides, in the Arabic responsum edited (along with a Hebrew translation) in S. L. Heilberg's *Niṭ'ē Na'amanim*, Hebrew Section, 17, No. 3 (see also German Section, 49 f.). When asked about the origin of the anthropomorphic Midrashim—the inquirer suggested that, of all people, the Karaites were perhaps to be blamed for them!—Maimonides replied that such compositions "must undoubtedly be the work of some Byzantine preacher" (אחד דרשנין). See also S. Buber's Introduction to *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Genesis-Exodus, 45 [23a].

then, the Karaites were in a position to exert influence on *Rabbanite intellectuals* in Byzantium through rationalistic attacks on talmudic and midrashic homilies which were popular there; on the other hand, they could take advantage precisely of this prevailing inclination to non-rationalistic religiosity, by addressing themselves to the emotionalism of the *simple Rabbanite folk* through sheer example of pietistic practice.

Indeed, some none-too-scholarly and none-too-discriminating pietists among the Byzantine Rabbanites would often prefer to play it safe and acknowledge particular expressions of godliness, notwithstanding their Karaite origin. At the same time they would avoid or, at least, hesitate in regard to specific practices frowned on by the sectarians although fully sanctioned by Rabbanite leadership and talmudic tradition. We shall not go wrong in assuming, too, that especially those pietistic practices which were imported from Jerusalem by Byzantine Karaite students (who joined the "Mourners of Zion" when on a study trip to the spiritual capital of the sect) enjoyed considerable vogue in the Rabbanite ranks.

But, apart from that twilight position of many a Rabbanite, which, as we recall, was quite widespread in Palestine and Egypt and which, incidentally, was not restricted to the lower strata of the population,²⁰ there must have been a considerable number of actual conversions.²¹ True, transition from one denomination to the other was rather simple in those times.²² Still, in view of the proximity of dwellings of Karaites and Rabbanites in the same locality, such conversions, especially where a larger group was involved, undoubtedly created a stir in the Jewish quarter. It should, therefore, not seem unreasonable to expect some kind of testimony to this effect in the Byzantine Karaite literature, in keeping with its usual triumphant glorification of Karaite missionary successes.

THE CONVERSION STORY

Chances are, indeed, that such testimony has actually been left for posterity by the eleventh-century leadership of Byzantine Karaism. It all

²⁰ Indeed, to this day the allegiance of several important personalities of that time remains a riddle and serves as a worthy theme of scholarly investigation. Especially well known are the discussions concerning the Tustari brothers, the Ben Asher family, and Yehūdah ibn Quraish. While Rabbanite persuasion has, so it seems, been established beyond doubt with regard to the Ben Ashers, and with a great degree of probability with regard to Ibn Quraish also, the very fact that these personalities were suspect at all of Karaite leanings is highly instructive.

²¹ There is, of course, no way of *statistical* evaluation of the success or failure of Karaite propaganda. For general *impressions* see my Hebrew essay in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 191 ff., and above, 80 ff.

²² This point was rightly stressed by Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*,

depends on how we evaluate a report, preserved by Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople, which clearly speaks of the conversion of a group from among the normative majority to the Karaite creed. This report has the obvious disadvantage of being included in Tobias' hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad* on Leviticus, a Hebrew compilation based to a very large extent on the Arabic commentaries of the two great tenth-century Palestinians, David ben Bo'az, the Naṣī, and Yefeth ben 'Alī, the master-exegete.

Now, much like other Byzantine compilations, Tobias' work, too, is phrased in such a way that the demarcation line between outright translation from older Arabic writings and the compiler's original contribution is not clearly visible and, in the present state of Karaite research, not easy to ascertain.²³ Hence, there is always the risk of erroneously ascribing to the Byzantine community a situation that was actually reported by an earlier writer from the Islamic environment. On the other hand, it is my impression that Tobias' candid admission of his indebtedness to David ben Bo'az and Yefeth ben 'Alī caused some scholars to underestimate his own contribution. They mistook his *Oṣar Neḥmad* for a mere collection of excerpts, fashioned after the manner of such Byzantine Karaite compositions as the later *Sefer ha-'Osher*.

A comprehensive study of the Bodleian manuscript of the work convinced me that this notion is inaccurate. While the book is, indeed, built on a constant confrontation of the exegetical and legalistic comments of the aforementioned great Palestinian scholars of the tenth century, it by no means follows uncritically the teachings of these two masters. Very often the author decides against the opinion of one of them or both, stating emphatically, "However, I, Tobias, say— —," and adding sometimes harsh words of criticism, too.²⁴ He further

V, 273 f. "For a long time [writes Baron], transfer from a Karaite to a Rabbanite congregation or vice versa, even where both existed side by side, appears to have been no more difficult than is change of membership from a Reform to a Conservative or an Orthodox congregation today."

²³ This is what Tobias himself tells us of the balance in his book between original composition and translation (A. Neubauer, *Bodleian Catalogue*, I, 58, No. 290; also Volume of Facsimilies, second half of Plate XXXV): ואני טוביה הסופר האבל מאבילי ציון: בתבתי זה הספר שהוא א' מספרי אוצר הנחמד. והוא סדר בהנים ובו רברי ארוננו דוד הנשיא ז"ל והמלמ' יפת הלוי ז"ל. והוספתי מה ששמעתי מרברי בעלי הדעת והמפרשי' הפותרים, האלהים יחד ירצמו ובשכרו הצפון יתעצם. והרחקתי הרחוק והקרובי הקרוב כדי כתי עשייתי בו שאלות כדי כתי ויכלתי.

For the full text of Tobias' statement and a broader discussion of Tobias' literary production, cf. below, Chapter VIII, esp. note 171. See also my analysis in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 47 ff.

²⁴ Cf. *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodleian MS No. 290, 104a: [כי אמר המלמד]—יפת: ואני טוביה אומ' כי אמר המלמד כי אמר לו מה תראיה על זה לא יהיה ימצא ראייה או לו אמר

embarks on independent excursions or polemics which definitely reflect problems confronting his community in the eleventh century. In our particular context, too, so it seems, the wording of the phrase permits crediting the report of Tobias with basic historicity and considering it a reflection of Tobias' own observations from the Byzantine scene rather than a mere translation of an earlier source.²⁵

A group from among the Rabbanites [relates Tobias], who used to exert themselves very ardently in justifying these [Rabbinic] presentations²⁶ and to proclaim very strongly their Rabbinism, seceded from the Rabbanite Synagogue, abandoned their religion and became Karaites. Indeed, they left behind the creed of the Rabbanites and do not any longer defend this heritage. [On the contrary], they get ever stronger in the religion of the Karaites, [so much so that now] they reversed [their role] and are repudiating their [former] presentations and revealing the secrets of the Talmud and the abominable things written therein which are unknown to the [non-Jewish] inhabitants of the land.

Still, even if one is to consider the above passage as an original statement of the Byzantine Tobias ben Moses and accept its contents at face value, there is no indication as to the number of the Byzantine converts won over to the Karaite cause. Nor is any clue given here as to whether the converts from orthodoxy to Karaism in any way outnumber

לר... ומה הפרק [=ההבדל] בין שאמרת אתה... ובין... שאמ' בעל ריבך, ולא ימצא בזה פרק... ואש' and many similar passages throughout the book.

²⁵ Cf. *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 96a; reproduced by P. F. Frankl, "Über Ben-Koreisch," *MGWJ*, XXX (1881), 471: אבל מצאנו קהל מן הרבנים אשר היו תומכים בחוק; כי החליטו לרבנים והגיתו דתם והיו קראין והגיתו את להצדיק אלה הגדות והיו מתחזקים בדת הרבנים, ותועבתה אשר בו בתר' ואינם יודעים אותם עם הארץ.

The text continues in the MS as following: מה בתוך בתוך: כי לו היה יודע עם הארץ מה בתוך בתוך: משנה ותלמוד מן התועבות שאמ' על ה' ועל נביאי היו טוקלים אותם over almost verbatim from Salman ben Yerūḥam, *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, 113: גודל התועבות האלה אשר ספרנו אם ישמעו בני נכר הלא יסקלונו וישחקו עלינו ויבזו אותנו. In accord with Salman's בני-נכר; I translated Tobias' expression עם הארץ as "non-Jewish inhabitants of the land." My earlier translation in *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 17, has to be corrected in this vein. Cf. also above, 241, note 78.

²⁶ The expression *haggadoth*, which appears twice in this excerpt, misled me at first into inferring that the Karaites concentrated their attacks especially on the anthropomorphic Aggadoth in Rabbinical literature. These were so popular with Byzantine homilists and their audiences that conversion to Karaism through persuasion on this point seemed quite rightfully a signal achievement. Cf. my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 17 f.

The study of the full MS of *Oṣar Neḥmad* made me realize that, in the broader context, *haggadah* means simply "presentation" or "account" (حكاية = *relatio*). While the conclusion reached in the above article is corroborated by other evidence, and consequently remains unchanged (see, for instance, below, 264 f.), the supporting evidence from the text just quoted will have to be dropped. My remarks have been corrected accordingly in *PAAJR*, XXV (1956), 181, note 4.

indicators of the actual extent of Karaite success. For the latter purpose Rabbanite apologetics and polemics must be consulted. Indeed, the local Rabbanite answer to Karaite polemics is, in some respects, even more relevant to our story than the Karaite creations. This is so not only because of its *general* significance, inasmuch as by its very existence it shows that, with the passing of years, Karaism has become a factor to be reckoned with in Byzantine Jewry. It is especially relevant because of its *specificness*: the points brought up by Rabbanite apologists and the intensity of such Rabbanite rebuttals offer distinctive clues to the areas in which sectarian encroachments spelled real danger to the normative cause and necessitated swift mending of Rabbanite fences. Thus, Byzantine Rabbanite apologetics and polemics against Karaism serve as a fairly sensitive meter by which to gauge the depth of Karaite invasion into different domains of Rabbinic life on Byzantine soil.

Indeed, toward the end of the eleventh century, the Rabbanite leader of Byzantine Jewry, Tobias ben Eliezer of Castoria and Thessalonica (not to be confused with his older Karaite contemporary, Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople!), could no longer ignore the influence of his sectarian neighbors.³⁰ The polemical passages and allusions, directed by Tobias ben Eliezer against the Karaites, constitute therefore an important historical testimony concerning the growth of Karaite strength and activity in eleventh-century Byzantium.

TOBIAS BEN ELIEZER

The Rabbanite leader addressed himself to his flock through a medium which he knew was best suited for the reading public he had in mind

say, of *Oṣar Neḥmad* would not only enhance the task of the *historian* of Karaism, but would also contribute to our knowledge of certain opposing schools of *exegesis* within the Karaite camp, a problem which has not even been touched upon by scholars. Thus, as already noted, the extant book of Tobias is built on a parallel exposition of the views of David ben Bo'az and of Yefeth ben 'Alī on the first ten chapters of Leviticus. While parts of Yefeth's Arabic commentaries have been recovered, no original texts of David's works have as yet come to light.

³⁰ Cf. on him S. Buber's Introduction to an edition of Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Genesis-Exodus (Vilna, 1880); L. Zunz, *Had-Derashoth be-Yisrael*, edited by Albeck (2nd ed.), 145 f., 441 ff. The various editions of *Leḳaḥ Tōb* (except for the earliest printings) as well as additional bibliography and points of interest are listed in Starr's *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 216 f., 252. A great deal of, but by no means all, the pertinent anti-Karaite material from the Pentateuch part of the Commentary has been assembled by Buber in his Introduction, 34 f. [17b f.].

In the succeeding notes reference will be made to Buber's aforementioned edition of Genesis-Exodus; A. M. Padwa's edition of Leviticus-Numbers-Deuteronomy

and for the listening audience he used to preach to in the synagogue. His *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls is a midrashic commentary of the typically Byzantine brand. So far as it is known, Tobias composed no special tract against the Karaites nor any specific work that could be properly classified as polemical. But, whenever warranted by the content of the weekly biblical portion he was expounding, the homilist would seize the opportunity of deprecating the Karaite practice associated with the scriptural passage, or deriding the Karaite way of explaining the text.

Characteristically, the objective and method of the Rabbanite leader's exhortations did not essentially differ from those of his counterpart in the opposite camp. Incessantly he warned his coreligionists against the tendency of overlooking the differences between the two factions in Jewry, and he never tired of stressing the major practical points of Rabbanite-Karaite divergence. Similar action was taken, we recall, by Tobias' Karaite contemporary, the anonymous exegete, quoted at length in the preceding chapter.³¹ The latter, too, seemed disturbed lest the difference between Karaism and the mode of life of the Rabbanite majority be lost sight of in the course of the ever closer interdenominational rapprochement, and cautioned his flock against the pitfalls of such a trend. The fact that the leadership on either side, though serving opposing interests, was in much the same way alarmed by the situation and took almost parallel steps in calling the attention of the rank and file of their respective communities to the seriousness of Karaite-Rabbanite *differences*, is not devoid of significance. It points to the extent of mutual Karaite-Rabbanite *borrowing* on the practical, day-to-day level, stressed all along in our presentation.

To be sure, Tobias ben Eliezer does not specifically name a single Karaite scholar, nor does he clearly quote by title a single Karaite composition in the numerous references to Karaite views which he introduced into his works. Only in two instances does he directly address his opponents as "Karaites,"³² and only once does he unwittingly admit

(Vilna, 1880; Starr's lists have to be corrected accordingly!); and, for the passages from *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on the Canticles, to both A. W. Greenup's edition of the full text (London, 1909) and A. Jellinek's compilation of excerpts, appended to his *Commentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liede von R. Samuel ben Meir* (Leipzig, 1855), App. II, 67 f. It goes without saying that a critical evaluation of Tobias' statements or the tracing of his sources are entirely beyond the scope of the present study.

³¹ Cf. above, 245 ff.

³² Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Deuteronomy, 70 [35b]:--כמה טעות טעו הקראים שאמרו-- and the quotation in the next note.

familiarity with a Karaite commentary.³³ Otherwise, he nonchalantly sneers at “the fools” and at “those who are in error,” or, even more frequently, simply fights opinions or ideas without introducing a tangible opponent.

Nevertheless, though using well-known clichés of Rabbanite-Karaite discussion, Tobias ben Eliezer’s *Leḳaḥ Tōb* is more important for the tracing of social relations between the two factions of Jewry in Byzantium than a more original or profound treatise could ever be. Being a *midrash*, i.e., a homiletical commentary, it is more than any other *genre* of Rabbinical writing indicative of ideas and arguments that were fed into the rank and file of Byzantine Jewry by popular preachers on Sabbaths and festivals. True, if strict terms of chronology are to be applied, the Commentary belongs to the very last years of the period covered by our discussion. It was composed, according to Tobias’ own testimony, during the First Crusade or a few years thereafter.³⁴ The replies and refutations it elicited from Karaite polemicists were inevitably of a much later date; they belong to the twelfth-century story of Karaite-Rabbanite relations.³⁵

Notwithstanding that, Tobias ben Eliezer surely expressed and summarized in his Commentary the anti-Karaite arguments and feelings which were voiced by Rabbinic authorities in Byzantium many years before the Crusade and which the local Karaite leadership had to cope with and refute from the very beginning. Hence, the information it yields is relevant to our reconstruction of the Karaite story in Byzantium

³³ *Ibid.*, 77 [39a]: והפותר של קראין... בידוע לא טוב פתר. Cf. also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 216 f., and above, 76, note 46.

³⁴ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Exodus, 26 f. [10b f.]: ובשנת ארבעת אלפים ושמונה מאות חמשים ושבע [1096-97] לבריאת הע'ולם - שהיא שנת אלף ועשרים ותשע לחרבן בית שני, שהיא שנת שנים עשר למחזור בינומי בספרי (for variant readings cf. Buber *ad loc.*) רבי, אני טוביהו בנו של רבינו אליעזר אליהו ואתנה לבי על אורך גלותינו כי אולת יד ואפס עצור ועזוב וכלו בל הקיצים ואין הרבר תלוי אלא ואני ברחב להיות זכרון מעשה שעשו קרושי עליון: [62a] בתשובה קהל מגנצא שמסרו עצמם ואת נשיהם ובניהם ובנותיהם ביום אחד בפרוס תג שבועות ונשחטו באיש אחר על קירוש שם אלהי ישראל בשנת התנ"ו לבריית עולם בשנתנו יד יושבי הארץ לעלות לרשת משכנות על בן עלמות אהבך (שה"ש א' ג)... בדרך שנעשה בימינו בקהלות אשכנז. Likewise, on Canticles, ed. Greenup, 15; Jellinek, *Commentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liede*, 67 f.: בשנת חת"ו בשנתנו יד בני שעיר לעלות על ארץ הצבי ושלחו [ג"א: ופשוט] ידיהם בקהלות ונשחטו על קירוש חטם. See also, in general, Buber's *Introd.*, 23 ff. [12a ff.], esp. No. 4.

³⁵ E.g., *Yehi Me'ōroth*, a fragment of which was published by Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṣē*, App. XI, 94 ff. Cf. the very beginning of the excerpt: ועור מצאתי אני העני בספר לקח טוב של ריבונין (= רבנים) The work, thought by Pinsker to be a composition by the eleventh-century Karaite, Tobias ben Moses, was proven to be a *Vorarbeit* of Yehūdāh Hadassī, preliminary to his magnum opus, *Eshkol hak-Kofer* (commenced in 1148). Cf. above, 30, note 8, and 51 f., note 66.

all through the eleventh century. It is indeed, indispensable for the understanding of the relations between the two branches of Byzantine Jewry ever since Karaism became a permanent feature in the communal landscape of Judaism on the banks of the Bosphorus.

IN DEFENSE OF THE AGGADAH

The task Tobias ben Eliezer had taken upon himself was not easy. The very midrashic character itself of his commentary lay his exposition of the Scriptures open to immediate Karaite attack. The anthropomorphic Aggadoth of the Talmud and the Midrashim, abundantly quoted by the author, were from the very outset made the object of ridicule and contempt by Karaite scholars and polemicists.³⁶ Having realized the homiletical trend of the local Rabbanite literature, the Karaite leaders, in Byzantium more than anywhere else, must have concentrated their attacks on the homilies in vogue among their Rabbanite neighbors.

As is easily visible from his line of defense, the Rabbanite apologist was keenly aware of his exposed position. Hence, whether for the mere sake of expediency or as result of sincere, possibly subconscious, absorption of the spirit of Karaite philosophy on the subject, he actually borrowed the Karaite method (itself indebted to the Talmud) of allegorizing the anthropomorphic portraits of the Deity that are to be found in the Five Books of Moses and in the Prophetic Writings, and applied it to the Aggadah.

Unlike his opponents, however, Tobias did not repudiate the midrashic presentations because of their anthropomorphic imagery. Rather, in an implied challenge to the Karaite view, he compared them to the anthropomorphic images in the Bible itself and found them no more objectionable than several scriptural metaphors against which no Karaite would dare raise his voice.³⁷

³⁶ See above, 240 f., and note 77 there. Cf. also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 49 f., 57, and *passim*.

³⁷ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Deuteronomy, 14 f. [7b f.]: ואל יתמה אדם על ההיכלות דר' ישמעאל ועל דברי ר' עקיבא אשר דיברו בספר הישר במעשה מרכבה כי כלם נכוחים למבין כי כוחות וגבורות הכל חמה, מצוי ולא כמצויא [צ"ל: כמצויאת] שום דבר. קרוב ולא כקריבת שום דבר בעולם. ראשון עד אין חקר. קדמון עד אין תכלית. את אחרונים עד אין סוף. ומי יכול לדבר על הנביאים אשר אמרו ואראה את ה' (ישעי' ו' א), דרשו את ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בחיותו קרוב (שם ב"ה ו), ראשו כתם פז (שה"ש ה' יא), ועמדו רגליו ביום ההוא (זכרי' י"ד ד), עיני ה' (דב' י"א יב), נתתי את ידודות נפשי (ירמי' י"ב ז), וכיוצא באלה לאין סוף.

For *merkabah* and the *Hekhaloth* Books, cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 40 ff. On *Sefer hay-Yashar* see *Ta'am Zeḳenim*, 65b, and *Oṣar ha-Ge'ōnim* (ed. Lewin), IV, on *Ḥagigah*, 20 (in a responsum by Hai Gaon); Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, III, 69; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 90. On the Byzantine Rabbanite students of

For

the Torah employed the language of men, and similarly did the Prophets, following the Torah, and the Hagiographa, following the Prophets, and the Sages, following them. The same method was common to them all.³⁸

Thus, the role of tradition, according to Tobias ben Eliezer, was not limited to the preservation of *scriptural ideas and values* in the abstract; tradition also perpetuated *biblical forms and figures of speech*. Viewed in this perspective, the Midrashim are not a mere by-product of the traditional lore. Neither are they inferior to the great halakhic creations of the talmudic sages, as certain Rabbanite lawmakers would prefer to present them when at pains to explain them to non-Rabbanites or to make them accord with their own rationalistic philosophy. The Midrashim are full-fledged links in the Chain of Tradition, and "they all are true and correct to him who has the understanding."³⁹

SABBATH CANDLES

In view of the special significance attached in Byzantium to the midrashic exposition of Scripture, the defense of the anthropomorphic Aggadoth and of their legitimate standing in Jewish lore—a basically academic problem—occupied an important place in Tobias ben Eliezer's apologia of Rabbinism. Otherwise, as already stressed above, Tobias seemed to devote little attention to the numerous instances of purely scholastic dissent which filled the pages of any contemporaneous Karaite book of biblical exegesis known to him. Instead, he scored especially the cases of socially manifest *divergences of practice*.

One of the most crucial and visible points of Rabbanite-Karaite divergence was the Rabbanite practice of lighting Sabbath candles—a practice which the Karaites did not observe until the fifteenth century and whose validity they vehemently challenged in the period under discussion and in earlier ages. Tobias ben Eliezer defended the Rabbanite position both from a juridical and a practical point of view.

In the first place, the lighting of Sabbath candles was definitely con-

this book and of the secret discipline of the *merkabah* (המרכבה) בספר הישר משכילים ובסוד המרכבה (מסתובלים), see *Megillath Ahima'as*, ed. Klar, 13; cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 70 and 114 f., No. 49. Of the Karaite polemicists, al-Ḳūmisī was probably the first to criticize *specifically* the Rabbanite use of *Sefer hay-Yashar*. See the references above, 240, note 77.

³⁸ *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Deuteronomy, 15a [8a] (continuing the passage quoted in the previous note): אלא דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם. ובין הנביאים אחרי התורה. והכתובים אחרי הנביאים. והנביאים אחריהם. הבל דרך אחד להם ובינה בדבר.

³⁹ *Ibid.* (continued): וכן הוא אומר וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך: כי ה' הוא האלהים (דב' ד' לט).

sistent with scriptural law. Repeating well-known Rabbinic arguments, Tobias reminded his audience that

all that the Torah has forbidden on a Sabbath is the intentional performance of work. Thence we may confidently deduce that he who lights a fire on Friday and leaves it burning during the Sabbath is not [in the understanding of the Law] making a fire burn on the Sabbath, since it has been lit the day before. In fact, this man acts in a way resembling the case of he who waters the field, leaving the irrigation canal open on Friday; the plants absorb the water on the Sabbath . . . All this comes to prove that the prohibition of fire on the Sabbath refers only to the actual lighting of it on that very day. However, if the act of lighting was performed the day before, [its continued existence on the Sabbath] is not forbidden.⁴⁰

To be sure, the Karaite concept of the prohibition of fire on the Sabbath⁴¹ has also gradually drawn closer to that of the Rabbanites, although not until some four centuries later did it bring about tangible changes of practice. Thus, already the eleventh-century Palestinian masters, notably Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, gave a new formulation to the nature of the transgression inherent in leaving a fire burning on the Lord's day.

The Karaite sages [summarizes Elijah Bashyachi in the fifteenth century] are divided into two great schools. The early lawmakers, such as 'Anan and those who followed him as late as the generation of Yeshū'ah, used to say that the prohibition of having a fire burn [on the Sabbath] is derived from the scriptural injunction (Ex. 35:3), "Ye shall kindle no fire [throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day]." Wherefore they concluded that as long as the fire is left burning on the Sabbath we, as it were, are [incessantly in the state of] breaking an explicit prohibition; hence, it is incumbent on us to extinguish the fire on the Sabbath, the moment we find it burning.

The other school [continues Bashyachi] is that of our master Yeshū'ah and his followers. They derived the prohibition of making a fire [on the Sabbath day] from the biblical verse (Ex. 20:10), "Thou shalt not do any manner of work [on the Sabbath]. . . ." Wherefore the aforementioned scholar declared that if the fire is found burning on the Sabbath, we are not permitted to extinguish it [on that day]. This obtains, because

⁴⁰ Cf. *Lekah Tōb* on Exodus, 211 [106a]: ולא אסרה חורה אלא מלאכה מחשבת, למרנו שאם מבעיר האש מערב שבת והוא דולק בשבת אין זה מבעיר בשבת, שהבערתו מאתמול, והוא דומה למי שמשקה את השדה ופתח את הנהר מערב שבת והשרשים שוחין כל יום השבת. ובודא וראה שהרי לא נאמר ולא יראה לך אש, ולא ימצא לך אש, כדרך שכתוב בחמץ. ועוד שהרי נאמר ביום השבת, וכל מקום שנאמר ביום אינו אלא בו ביום (ויקרא' כ"ד ז) ביום השבת ביום השבת, ואומר (שמי' מ' ב) ביום החדש הראשון באחד לחדש תקים את משכון, וכן כיוצא בתוך; ללמדך שלא נאסרה הבערה אלא לכו ביום אבל אם הבערה מאתמול אינה אסורה.

This last point, however, required some qualification in a different context. Cf. *Lekah Tōb* on Genesis, 17 [9a]: ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי (ברי' ב' ב). טרם יום השביעי, כי ביום: משמע טרם ומשמע בו בעצמו כמו ביום הזה באו מרבד סיני (שמי' י"ט א) והוא בו בעצמו. ויש בו ביום שהא טרם, כמו אך ביום הראשון השביתו שאור מבתיכם (שמי' י"ב טו) והוא קודם יום טוב אכל כל מקום שנאמר ביום ההוא בודאי בו ביום, כמו לא תבערו אש בכל מושבותיכם ביום whatsoever: השבת (שמי' ל"ח ג) והוא בו ביום עצמו.

⁴¹ For a comprehensive discussion of the Karaite legislation concerning the Sabbath consult Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 54a ff., Alphabets 144 ff.

as long as we leave the fire burning we "do work" in the figurative way merely, whereas the extinguishing of fire entails "doing work" in its literal legal meaning.

Truly [adds the fifteenth-century codifier in Constantinople], one ought to be aware of the difference, nay, the contrast, between these two schools.⁴²

It was, indeed, this first breach in the wall of Karaite conservatism by the Palestinian mentors of early Byzantine Karaism that paved the road for the great innovations which were forced through by Karaite legislators in Byzantium and Turkey in the fifteenth century.⁴³ For all practical purposes, however, the difference between the cheerful illumination of Rabbanite homes and the gloomy darkness into which the neighboring Karaite dwellings were plunged every Friday night remained in the eleventh century as pronounced as before and continued to serve as a theme for ever-recurring polemics.

JOY OR MOURNING

In addition to the standard juridical point, Tobias ben Eliezer stressed also the practical advantages of a candle-lit home on Sabbath's eve—what with the eventual necessity of kindling a fire when the Sabbath proper is on, in case sudden illness strikes an unlit home, or what with flies and vermin infesting food consumed in darkness.⁴⁴ The solution of serving the Sabbath meal earlier in the day (i.e., on Friday afternoon) is at all events unacceptable, since no holiness can be attached to the afternoon of the sixth day in the week. Would not the main motive be missing if the festive dinner honoring the Sabbath be held on what to all intents and purposes is a regular weekday? Friday would then resemble the eve of a fast-day, when the repast is taken before dark also, rather than the eve of a day of rest and joy.⁴⁵

⁴² Cf. *Addereth Eliyyahū*, 50 b-c (it being the final classification of the different schools, expounded in Section *Shabbath*, Ch. XVII): חכמי הקראים נחלקו לשתי תורות גדולות. האחת והם הראשונים כהחכם רבינו ענן והנמשכים אחריו עד דור רבינו ישועה היו אומרים שאסור ההדלקה ועד ממאמר לא תבערו ואמרו שכל עת שהאש דולקת בשבת כאלו אנו עובדים בלאו ועל זה חוב שנכבה אותה בשבת כשנמצאה דולקת. והתורה השנית שהיא רבינו ישועה והנמשכים אחריו הרציאו אסור ההדלקה ממאמר לא תעשה כל מלאכה... ואמר החכם הזכור שאם נמצא האש מדולקת בשבת אסור לנו לכבותה משני שאם היה מודלקה נקרא עושה מלאכה ע"ד מעבר ואם נכבה אותה נקרא עושה מלאכה באמת. וצריך לדעת מהפירוש והצנור שיש בין אלה השתי תורות.

⁴³ Cf. above, 251, note 104. See also earlier, 235, and notes 60-62 there.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Exodus, 106 [53b]: ומי שאוכלין בלילי שבתה בלא נר בחשך ירמו, כי: Another variation on a similar theme is given later in the same Commentary, 211 [106a]: חכמים אומרים מצוה להדליק מפני שלום בביתו שלא יבא אדם לידי חילול מצוה, כגון שהוצרכה לו נר לחולה ולחיה, ועוד רואה במאמר שלום שלא יאכל בחשך ואפילו שרץ בקצהו אינו רואה

ואם באמר יאכל מבעוד יום אין זה כבוד השבת שהרי: *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Exodus, 211 [106a]: And earlier, 106 [53b]: לא נחקדש היום במאכל ובמשתה ואם יאכל מבעוד יום קדם שמקדש היום, הרי הוא חושב כהענין צבור שאוכלין מבעוד יום

Tobias' stress on the "joy of the Sabbath," while based (as all other of his arguments) on talmudic sources, was not merely a conventional repetition of the familiar, centuries-old Rabbinic pronouncements; it was directed specifically against his Karaite contemporaries on Byzantine soil. The sectarian pietists of Byzantium, following the mode of life of the Palestinian "Mourners of Zion," rejected the Rabbanite concept of *'oneg shabbath* (= Sabbath's delight) as incongruous with the state of national mourning which the Exile imposes on the Jew. They allowed, of course, that more than average comfort was *permissible* on the Sabbath by law,⁴⁶ and that no "private" mourning, such as that occasioned by a bad dream or sudden disaster or by the death of one's relative, was to be observed on that day.⁴⁷ But they argued that true piety demanded self-imposed denial of the legally permitted Sabbath pleasures. Only by converting, of one's own volition and zeal, the Sabbaths and the festivals into days of fasts and sadness, one truly invested exilic (i.e., national) mourning with its deepest and most intense meaning.⁴⁸ It remained only to invoke history in support of such procedure⁴⁹ and to taunt the Rabbanites for having proscribed the reading of *kīnoth*, or Lamentations, on Sabbaths and holidays.⁵⁰

But there was also a point of principle involved in the Karaite-Rabbanite controversy over Sabbath candles, and Tobias ben Eliezer had to be on guard in order to answer Karaite objections on that score. As is

ראינו זה תענוג שבת אלא תענוג חיל וגם בזה לא בחר ה' ריחוק הגוף מותר לנו [= בשבת]: See Buber's note 50 *ad loc.* for a variant reading in the Treatise *Shabbath* of the Babylonian Talmud, fol. 25b, whence the passage quoted here was taken.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 56c-d, Alphabet 149: כנון אכילה ושתייה ותנומה שלא יצום אדם וצורך הגוף ועמידה ושיבתו ודבור תפלה וקריאת תורה אע"פ שהן נכללים במלאכות מותרים לנו.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 56d, Alphabet 150: וצרות הנקראו לך ומיתות טפוי ועוללי' וגדולי' וילדיך שלא יצום אדם ויתענה בימי קדשך אודות חלומות והבלי' ודברי' רעיו'.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: אבל לצום ולהתענו' ולהתאבל על חלול כבודו ושממות מקדשו ועירו וגלות עמו וחלול יחודו: ואפיסת קחלתו ועדתו והשמדתם וחריגת' כצרת המן האגני יבטל הענג

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: כמרדכי ואסתר החסיד' תעל ש"ה ע"מ [= שכבת הטל על מלונם] שצמו בארבעה עשר ובחששה: עשר וששה עשר לח' הא' [= לחדש האחרון] בימי תניך ודניאל שנתאבל וצם שלשה שבועים יום, כן מותר עליך לבטל בענג.

Also the Byzantine Jacob ben Reuben reported that "many of us observe [in Byzantium] the Fast of Daniel from the thirteenth to the twenty-fourth of Nisan," which obviously included the intervening Sabbaths and Passover. Cf. the hitherto unpublished Leviticus section of his *Sefer ha-Osher*, MS Leiden Warner No. 8, 56a (on Lev. 23:27): ועניתם את גשש[תיכם]... ועלינו הצומות הדי' כל ימי שממות המקדש ורבים ממנו יצומו צום דניאל מ"ג לחדש ניסן עד כ"ד בו.

⁵⁰ Cf. the anti-Rabbanite complaint of Tobias ben Moses in the as yet unpublished *Ošar Nehmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 27b: ... ות"ש... (ו)כמי' שאסרו דבר אש' לא יאסרו יי' ית"ש... שלא יאמרו קינות בשבת על חרבן בית יי' ויגלות עמו

well known, the mishnaic sages have preserved a rather detailed discussion regarding the lighting of candles on Sabbath eve. This discussion, incorporated later into the Rabbanite Order of Prayer, reveals a wide divergence of opinion among the Rabbinic authorities with reference to certain practical matters associated with the problem. Sectarian propaganda was quick to exploit these intra-Rabbanite differences not only in support of the Karaites' own repudiation of the Rabbinic custom of lighting candles on Friday night but also as alleged proof of the general unreliability of talmudic tradition. For, argued the Karaites, if the Rabbanite assertion that the practice of Sabbath candles dated back to the time of Moses were true, how could this Mosaic tradition have been questioned by some Rabbanite scholars, as evidenced by the mishnaic discussion?

Tobias ben Eliezer categorically rejects the Karaite accusation. Much like the later Ibn Daūd in Spain, he hails the unanimity displayed by Rabbinic scholars all through the ages with regard to the *principle* of lighting candles on the eve of the Sabbath and minimizes the differences among them as pertaining only to *details of observance*.⁵¹

Truly, all that the sages of all generations differed about was "What do we light with" and "What don't we light with." However, there was no difference among them whatsoever regarding the lighting itself: [they all agreed] that it is correct to light [Sabbath candles]; which goes to prove that there was a tradition in Israel from the days of Moses to light candles [in honor of the Sabbath].⁵²

UPHOLDING THE CALENDAR

The calendary system provided another focal point of Rabbanite-Karaite dissension. Calendar conflicts in Byzantium will be discussed fully in the next chapter of this study. Nevertheless, it is relevant to pause briefly at this point, when discussing Tobias' anti-Karaite polemics, and consider his personal role in defending the Rabbanite precalculated calendar in the Empire. The Karaites consistently pressed for the actual observation of the New Moon and for up-to-date reports of

⁵¹ Cf. Ibn Daūd's *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 47: (ו)שלא (ז)נחלקו רז"ל בעיקר מצוה אלא בהולדותיה. כיוצא בדבר לא נחלקו אם מדליקין גר בשבת או לא, ועל מה נחלקו? במה מדליקין ובמה אין מדליקין. See my comments below, beginning of Chapter VIII.

⁵² Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Exodus, 211 [106a]: וכל חכמי הדורות לא נחלקו אלא במה מדליקין ובמה אין מדליקין אבל בהערה עצמה שראוי להדליק לא נחלקו בלל; ללמדך שקבלה היתה לישראל מימי משה רבינו להדליק הגר. And earlier in the same Commentary, 106 [53b]: וכל חכמי ישראל השוו בדבר זה להדליק גר בשבת, לא נחלקו אלא במה מדליקין ובמה אין מדליקין.

Cf. further B.M. Lewin, "On the History of Sabbath Candles," *Essays and Studies in Memory of Linda R. Miller*, Hebrew Section, 55 ff., 59, 62.

the state of new crops (*abīb*) in Palestine as the only admissible evidence for determining *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* and the leap-year, respectively. Accordingly, they often celebrated the festivals on dates other than their Rabbanite neighbors.

Tobias ben Eliezer based his refutation of the Karaite position on very ancient tradition, on a differentiation between the physical situation of the Jewish people in ancient Palestine and in the Diaspora, and on the dictates of Jewish unity.

Commenting on the Karaite demand of lunar observation, Tobias declared:

So long as the Jews were settled on their land, they used to sanctify the month on the basis of [actual] observation by witnesses. But since the time they are in Exile, there is no permanent [authoritative] court to investigate and examine [the matter]. And in order that Jews should not observe the same holiday on different days, the father today, the son tomorrow, and his brother the day after, they based themselves on the rules of the intercalation formula the way it was calculated from Adam to Noah, Noah transmitting it to Shem, and Shem to our father Jacob, and Jacob to Kehath, and Kehath to Amram [the father of Moses]. And unto this very day it has been transmitted to the Sages of Israel, so that they may sanctify the month accordingly. . . .

Likewise, since Scripture has stated, "For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted on that same day" (Lev. 23:29), this commandment was given to all Israel that they should fast and deny themselves on the same day, equally, and not one today and one tomorrow. And by now, Jewry is scattered in lands where the moon is not seen in the way it was seen in the Land of Israel. Yet, the Torah had stated, "Ye shall have one law" (Num. 15:29), and not a variety of observances.⁵³

On one point both Rabbanites and Karaites agreed: some means must be found to relate the Jewish (lunar) calendar to the solar year, "lest you find the Passover Festival rotating through all the months of the year, as with the Ishmaelites" (i.e., as the Muslim *Ramadhān* moves through various seasons).⁵⁴ The vital issue which divided Rabbanite

⁵³ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Exodus, 54 f. [27b f.]: רבונן שהיו ישראל שרויין על אדמתם היו מקדשין את החדש עפ"י ראייית העדים וכשגלו אין בית דין קבוע לחקור ולדרוש וכדי שלא יהיו ישראל עושיין ב' ימים טובים בשינוי זה מזה, האב היום והבן מחר ואחיו למחרת, עמדו ישראל על תקנות סוד העיבור שהיו מחשיבין מאדם ועד נח ונח מסרו לשם, ושם ליעקב אבינו, ויעקב אבינו לקהת, וקהת לעמרם, ועד היום הזה הוא מסור לחכמי ישראל לקדש בו חדשים. . . ובין שאמר החתוב (ויקרא' כ"ג בט) כי כל הנפש אשר לו תעונה בעצם היום הזה, לכל ישראל צוה המצוה הזאת להיות צומים (צ"ל: צמים) ומתענים ביום אחד בשוה, ולא זה היום זה למחר. וכבר ישראל נפוצים בארצות שאין הלבנה נראית כדרך שהיתה נראית בארץ ישראל והתורה אמרה (במדב' ט"ז כט) תורה אחת תהיה לכם, לא חילוק דתות.

Although the editor remarked that the whole passage belongs to the pen of Tobias (הם דברי רבינו מדנפשיה; cf. note 66 *ad loc.*), Tobias has undoubtedly paraphrased some older texts, adding here and there points of particular importance to his own time. For his sources in attributing biblical origin to the precalculated calendar, going even beyond the famous claims of Saadyah Gaon that stirred an uproar among the Karaites and caused embarrassment to Rabbanite leaders, see M. Kasher, *Tōrah Shelēmah*, XIII, 5a ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 124 [62b]: תגו רבנן על ג' סימנין מעברין את השנה על האביב:

and Karaite leaders was the *means* by which such intercalation should be obtained. Whereas in the opinion of the Rabbanites the precalculated nineteen-year cycle (*maḥazōr*) was the only means of assuring regularity of the calendar in the Diaspora, the Karaites of the generations prior to the Crusades continued to insist on observing the old method. In their opinion, the annual search for the early ripened barley in Palestine (*abīb*), and not calculation, was the proper safeguard against the pitfalls which the Muslim calendar failed to avoid.

THE PASSOVER INCIDENT

It is in this connection, indeed, that we hear, for the first time in Byzantium, of Rabbanites taking that twilight position reported above for other regions (as well as for *later* Byzantine periods) in following the Karaites on matters of calendation. For, while the leadership on each side remained adamant in its conception, there were some Rabbanites among the ordinary folk who must have felt uneasy about the practical implications of that controversy, lest they pursue the wrong course. Consequently, they would try to play it safe by observing *both* the Rabbanite and the Karaite dates of the festivals.

Now, we remember, our evidence to this effect with regard to Palestine came from the tenth-century Sahl ben Maṣṣīah who, being a Karaite, is perhaps suspect of exaggeration.⁵⁵ Not so in Byzantium: here we are in a position to summon a most reliable witness, a Rabbanite, and base our assertion on his clear-cut admission. This witness is none other but the aforequoted protagonist and leader of Byzantine Rabbinism, Tobias

ועל פירות האילן ועל התקופה... ועכשו אין מעברין לא על האביב ולא על פירות האילן... אבל מעברין על תקון השנים שנת החמה על שנת הלבנה כמשפט גוי'ח י"א י"ד י"ז י"ט, אלו שבעה שני עבורין בכל מחזור של י"ט שנים שאילולי כן אתה מוצא הפסח בא מסובב כל חדשי השנה כדרך הישמעלים שאין להם פסח קבוע בדתם אלא מסובב. והתורה אמרה (דב' ט"ז א) שמור את חדש האביב, עשה לו שמירה שיבא עשיית פסח קבוע בדתם אלא מסובב. מועדינו פעם בתוך החודש ופעם בתוך הקיץ בלי עתות האביב של ארצך method safeguard the proper recurrence of Passover in spring is reiterated in *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Deuteronomy, 51 [26a]: שמור את חדש האביב (דב' ט"ז א) שמור את חדש של עיבור מפני: האביב שיהא בזמנו.

A similar warning, with a different conclusion of course, is voiced also by the Karaite Yehūdah Hadassī, Tobias' younger contemporary. Cf. his *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76d, Alphabet 189-190: מועדינו פעם בתוך החודש ופעם בתוך הקיץ בלי עתות האביב של ארצך here the point which had been raised a century and a half earlier by the Palestinian Karaite Levi ben Yefeth. Cf. his as yet unpublished *Book of Precepts* (in a Byzantine Hebrew translation), Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 34a.

⁵⁵ See above, 252 f., and the text in note 2 there (last part of the quoted passage): והם (=הרבנים) ערשים בעזרת שדי את המועדים שני ימים יום אחד בראית הירח ויום אחד כאשר היו ערשים לפנים ועם כל זה הם חוקרים ודורשים. ויש מהם שהאיר השם עיניהם והגיתו חשבון העבור

ben Eliezer. Scolding those of his flock who preferred to observe the Passover *twice*, in accord with both the Rabbanite and Karaite calendars, Tobias declares:

And if a man should decide to duplicate, celebrating two feasts of Passover—if so, then he is also bound to fulfill the pronouncements of both [i.e., Rabbanites and Karaites] in regard to *Ašereth* and *Sukkoth* throughout the years, in the same manner as he has begun. And since he fails to do so, he demonstrates for all to see that his deeds are as naught. And anyone who performs a deed haphazardly cannot be considered intelligent and his religious practice is tantamount to no practice at all. Therefore, you must not duplicate in matters on which the Sages of blessed memory have already decided.⁵⁶

There is no doubt whatsoever that Tobias was not dealing here with a mere theoretical consideration but alluded to a definitive event or perhaps even to several incidents of a similar nature. This follows both from the intensity of Tobias' exhortation and from his accusation that the persons involved chose to be especially careful about the correct observance of Passover while ignoring the same calendar difficulties with regard to other holidays. Such particular caution with regard to Passover was well in keeping with the special significance attached in Byzantium to the Easter season and to possible calendar discrepancies arising in this connection.⁵⁷ Indeed, chances are that with the aid of an early Karaite record, preserved in the fourteenth-century code of the Byzantine Aaron ben Elijah, a clue can be found to the actual occurrence which Tobias ben Eliezer may have been referring to.

It has been related [so goes the Karaite report] through reliable witnesses that the moon was sighted [on a certain date], wherefore the Karaites sanctified then the month [of Nisan]. However, the day [of the first of Nisan], as fixed by the Rabbanites [through calculation], was due to fall on the next day. . . . Now, the author who wrote down this story narrated further that some people from among the Rabbanites felt apprehensive [as to the correctness of their own date] and observed the custom of removing all leavened bread in accordance with [the date determined by] the Karaites [i.e., one day earlier than the majority of the Rabbanites].⁵⁸

It goes without saying that those Rabbanites who followed the Karaite calendar with reference to the night preceding Passover eve, on which

⁵⁶ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 124 [62b]: ואם יבא אדם לשנות ולעשות שני חג המצות אם כן חייב הוא לקיים דברי שניהם גם עצרת וסכה כל השנים, כדרך שמתחיל, ואם לא עשה כן אם כן מראה הוא לעולם שאין במעשיו כלום, וכל מי שעושה מעשה בלא עילה אינו נקרא חכם ואין דתו דת, לפיכך אין לך לשנות על דברי חכמים ז"ל.

⁵⁷ See on it below, Chapter VII, notes 103–6, and my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium," *PAAJR*, XXV (1956), 159, note 57.

⁵⁸ Cf. Aaron ben Elijah's *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Kiddūsh ha-Ḥōdesh*, Ch. VIII, 8d: סופר ע"ם עדים נאמנים שנדאתה הלבנה וקרשו הקראים ויום קביעת הרבנים היה למחר. . . והכותב זה הענין ספר שאנשים מן הרבנים חששו ועשו בעור חמץ בעקבות הקראים. See also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 43; Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 208 f., No. 154; and below, Chapter VII, note 129. I have emended the text to read בעקבות instead of בקראים.

the leavened bread is traditionally removed from Jewish homes, also celebrated the first day of Passover proper in accord with the sectaries, i.e., one day prior to the rest of their coreligionists. In addition, they undoubtedly did not fail to also observe the feast of Passover on the day after, according to the general Rabbanite reckoning. Thus, they actually kept the holiday twice.

Now, it is true that no clear indication is available as to the exact date of the above event. Nevertheless, the contiguity of this report to the account of another instance of Karaite-Rabbanite calendar discrepancy in Byzantium, cited by the same Karaite code, may perhaps not be devoid of relevance. Since the other incident, preceding our Passover report, was dated 1097 C.E., there is some reason to suppose that the Passover story, following immediately after the account of 1097, happened not much later, i.e., during the period of Tobias ben Eliezer's activity, and elicited from that leader the very exhortation quoted above.

DENOUNCEMENT BY ASSOCIATION

In all events, whether or not Tobias alluded to the particular incident reported by the Karaites, the sectaries' influence on some Rabbanites in Byzantium in matters of calendation cannot be doubted. Since the adherence to a calendar was the commonly accepted criterion of one's denominational identity, the manifestation of such influence was an ominous sign indeed. No wonder, then, that Tobias ben Eliezer reacted with vigor against any breach in this matter within his own ranks. No wonder also that he used every opportunity to discredit non-normative calendation.

In this connection Tobias' heated criticism of those who also observed a solar month of thirty days should be noted.⁵⁹ This criticism poses a problem. It does not seem to be a mere restatement of discarded ideas, introduced for the sake of refutation.⁶⁰ The language of Tobias' refutation is too strong and urgent to be shelved as simply academic. Likewise, it is difficult to know, in the present state of research, whether there

⁵⁹ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōh* on Leviticus, 124 [62b]: אין זה דרך הדעת לחשב החדשים משלשים יום כולם, ומי שעושיין אותו ברשע אין חסים על כבוד קונם, ועליהם אמר ישעיה [צ"ל: ירמיה] הנביא רועים רבים שחתו כרמי (ירמ' י"ב ו'), רועיהם התעום הרים שובבים מהר אל גבעה (שם ג' ו'), וילכו במוטעות (שם ז' כד) בשרירות לבם (שם ז' כד). For an English version of the passage cf. below, Chapter VIII (cf. there also, note 103).

⁶⁰ This is, for instance, how Mann explains the presence of the same point in what he believes to be a Rabbanite text, published by L. Ginzberg, *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 491 ff., esp. 496. Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 60, note 111.

were in Byzantium any followers of Yehūdah Happarsī with whom the idea of a solar month is generally associated in the literature of the age.⁶¹ But there is no question as to the presence of Happarsī's commentaries in the Empire. These were ardently studied and excerpted by Byzantine *Karaites*—although, later, for the sake of criticism only.

On the other hand, Tobias ben Eliezer may have been vaguely aware of Ẕirḳisānī's attribution of the thirty-day month to the Sadducees and of some accounts ascribing the same view to the followers of the seventh-century sectary Abū 'Īsā al-Īṣfahānī.⁶² He surely was familiar with Saadyah's refutation of the theory expounded by 'Anan ben David that a thirty-day month was to be proclaimed whenever the moon was invisible, regardless of the number of days in the preceding month.⁶³ He might have also read that Benjamin an-Nahāwendī, too, subscribed to a mechanical division of the year into equal, thirty-day months, leaving lunar observation to *Rōsh-Ḥodesh Nisan* (spring) and *Rōsh-Ḥodesh Tishrī* (fall) alone. A lengthy quotation to this effect has, indeed, been preserved in the eleventh-century Commentary on the Pentateuch of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah.⁶⁴

Of course, chances are that Tobias ben Eliezer had in mind the Mishawite sectaries who apparently were active in Byzantium at that time and

⁶¹ Cf., for instance, Abraham ibn Ezra, Introduction to his Commentary on the Pentateuch; his comment *ad Ex.* 12:2; and other passages.

⁶² These accounts were later reduced to writing and utilized in Byzantium, e.g., by the mid-twelfth-century Hadassī. Cf. his *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 41c, Alphabet 97: אף הם (=העיסונים) עושים המעודי ברבריות בשנת החמה. As reported by Ẕirḳisānī (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 52; Eng. tr., Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 382), the Rabbanites associated with the 'Īsūnians and intermarried with them in view of the latter's adherence to the Rabbanite-appointed dates of festivals. This could not have been possible, so it seems, if the 'Īsūnians should indeed have kept a solar calendar. Or, shall we say that, like the Mishawites (see Chapter VIII), they, too, adhered *theoretically* (כרבריות) to a solar calendar, but resigned themselves to the Rabbinic system as far as actual *practice* was concerned? Cf. below, Chapter VIII, note 64.

For the Sadducean view see Ẕirḳisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 794 (bottom) f.

⁶³ On 'Anan's views in the matter and Saadyah's refutation thereof, see, most recently, Zucker's excellent Hebrew essay, "Against Whom Did Se'adyah Ga'on Write the Polemical Poem *Essā Meshali*," *Tarbiz*, XXVII (1957), 71, note 57, and 80 f., and the sources cited above, 273, note 60.

⁶⁴ See the passage reproduced by Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 176-78. There, 177, Nahāwendī is reported to have declared that מונים ימי חודשי תקופת שלשים יום שלשים יום. Ẕirḳisānī's statement in *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 55—وكان [= Benjamin] يجوز اتخاذ رؤوس الشهور على العدر الا نيسن وتشرين فانه لم يجز اتخاذها الا على رؤية الهلال (Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 387)—is but an abridgment of the beginning part of the passage adduced by Yeshū'ah. Cf. also L. Ginzberg, *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 496.

who were fought by contemporary Byzantine Karaites even more vigorously than by the Rabbanite majority.⁶⁵ The Mishawites, indeed, observed the Lord's day from the morning of the Sabbath until Sunday morning, which implies that they adhered to a solar calendar.⁶⁶ If our assumption that Tobias was referring to the Mishawites should prove correct, then we shall have been allowed an interesting glimpse into the technique of anti-Karaite polemics in Byzantium. Tobias' vigorous denunciation of the solar calendar surely found willing listeners among the overwhelming majority of Byzantine Jews, whether Rabbanite or Karaite, especially since such calendar ran counter to the sacrosanct observance of Sabbath eve.⁶⁷ However, the fact that Tobias refrained from pointing specifically to the living object of his criticism, but, rather indiscriminately, associated this criticism with his harsh exhortation against those who follow *Karaite* calendation, is perhaps not entirely accidental. Possibly, there was a *system* in this procedure. Whether through ignorance or deliberately, all kinds of non-normative practices and views, even when mutually contradictory and obviously contrary to the official Karaite position, would be lumped together and pinned by Rabbanite polemicists on the Karaite newcomers in the Empire. It is this unscrupulous procedure of wholesale accusation and of denouncement by association that must have proven the most effective line of attack on the Karaites during the early stages of their settlement in Byzantium and demanded of their leadership constant alertness and struggle.⁶⁸

"THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH"

A third point of contention between the two factions of Byzantine Jewry was the interpretation of Leviticus 23:15. From the very outset of their schism the Karaites insisted on explaining the verse, "And ye shall count unto you *from the morrow after the Sabbath*. . . seven weeks shall there be complete," as an indication of the fixed yearly recurrence of the

⁶⁵ See on it at greater length Chapter VIII, below, and briefly above, 119.

⁶⁶ See the recent explanation by S. Talmon, against the background of "The Calendar Reckoning of the Sect from the Judaeen Desert," *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [= *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV (1958)], esp. 193 f.

⁶⁷ See above, 119, and note 112 there, as well as Chapter VIII, below. Benjamin of Tudela speaks of the adherents of this calendar as "being excommunicated by Israel everywhere." All the material pertaining to the Mishawites has now been subjected to a renewed analysis in my *Mishawiyyah: Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*.

⁶⁸ This problem and the Karaite action against such indiscriminate accusations are discussed more fully in Chapter VIII.

Festival of Weeks on a Sunday only. The Rabbanites, in turn, read the crucial phrase to mean “from the morrow after the *holiday*,” and began the count of Seven Weeks from any weekday following the first day of Passover as fixed by their precalculated calendar.⁶⁹

Again, the intensity of Tobias’ reply to the sectarian challenge may serve as an unwitting testimony to the extent of non-normative encroachment on the mode of observance of the Shabū’oth Festival by local Jewry, following the arrival of Karaites in Byzantium. It seems that the sectaries’ stress on having the holiday fall exclusively on a Sunday was bearing fruit. At all events, Tobias ben Eliezer considered it imperative to dwell at great length on this particular difference between the normative practice and the practice advocated by his dissident neighbors.

First of all, of course, he reiterated the traditional Rabbinic reservations in the matter, which were but a continuation of the ancient mishnaic refutation of the Sadducees.⁷⁰ The latter, as is well known, preceded medieval sectarianism by many centuries in interpreting “the morrow after the Sabbath” literally; Sadducean-Karaite kinship was not yet so vigorously repudiated by Karaite scholarship of that period, as it was about to be a few generations later.⁷¹ The old reasoning, however, so

⁶⁹ For a compilation of Karaite arguments in the matter see Ẕirkisani’s *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 852 ff., and Hadassi’s *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, esp. 85b ff., Alphabets 22–24. Cf. also the unpublished discussion of Jacob ben Reuben’s *Sefer ha-Osher* on Deuteronomy, where a lengthy discussion is devoted to Lev. 23:15 (Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 55b): ממחרת השבת. יש [אומר] כי הוא ממחרת המועד. ודע כי אין בכל המקרא שבת בה’ חוץ יום שבת. וגם אין שבת ולא שבתון וזלת יום שבת חוץ בי בת’ ביום תרועה וכפור וטבות ויום ראשון ושמיני כי לכל א’ ביאר שמו ובכמה לחדש ואחר כן קראם שבתון פן נשגה בהם, ועם כל זאת לא קראם השבת בה’ המיועד, ואיך נוכל לומר כי ממחרת השבת הוא מחרת מק”ק [=מקרא קדש] and so on, in the same vein. See also Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadia Gaon*, passim; his “Miscellen über Saadia-II,” *MGWJ*, XLI (1896–97), 205 ff.; and, most recently, M. Zucker’s Hebrew study of “Saadyah’s Role in the Controversy over *mim-Moḥorath hash-Shabbath*,” *PAAJR*, XX (1951), Hebrew Section, 1–26. Cf. also L. Ginzberg’s *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 478, 493 ff.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 127 f. [64a f.], beginning with ממחרת השבת ממחרת שבת בראשית. יום טוב. שאם אתה אומר שבת בראשית... its earliest occurrence in Karaite literature was traced by L. Ginzberg to the writings of the ninth-century Daniel al-Ḳūmisī. Cf. *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 478, 483 f. See, however, Zucker’s objections in *PAAJR*, XX (1951), Hebrew Section, 1, notes 2–3, recalling a passage in Ẕirkisani’s *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 852. There, the assertion is made that all the sectaries in the century preceding al-Ḳūmisī—such as ‘Anan, Benjamin, Ismā’il al-‘Ukbarī, at-Tiflīsī and ar-Ramlī—have taken the same position.

⁷¹ Thus Ẕirkisānī (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 11; Eng. tr., Nemoi, *Karaite Anthology*, 50) stresses the fact that Boethus “was of the opinion that Pentecost can fall only on a Sunday, which is also the view of the ‘Ananites and of all the Karaites.” Cf. also the somewhat similar statement in a later passage, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 42. This emphasis on Karaite-Sadducean similarity is in line with Ẕirkisānī’s view of Zadok as “the

Tobias felt, could hardly dispose of the singularly vehement campaign which the Karaites were waging on the subject. He, therefore, added to it a lengthy excursus of his own, advancing new linguistic and logical proofs.

Among the points specifically adduced by Tobias was also one concerning the 'omer, or the early sheaves, stipulated by Scripture to be cut on the first day of Passover. Because of the general prohibition of work on the Sabbath, the need would frequently arise for postponing the cutting of the 'omer, thus necessitating adjustments in the calendar. Tobias drives the calculation *ad absurdum* and exposes the unwieldiness of the Karaite method, by showing how such postponement might require a chain of additional adjustments which would play havoc with the sectarian count of Seven Weeks from "the morrow after the Sabbath."

Wherefore I say [he concludes triumphantly his argument], there is no other solution left to you but that of our Sages (blessed be their memory): "The morrow after the Sabbath' means simply 'the morrow after the [first day of the Passover] Festival'."⁷²

Characteristically, whether because of the perseverance in Byzantium of ancient memories from the Holy Land or because of actual observation of agricultural habits in Palestine by Byzantine Jewish pilgrims and "Mourners of Zion," discussions concerning the 'omer seem to have

first to expose the errors of the Rabbanites" and as one who "discovered part of the truth." This attitude underwent a complete change in later generations because of historical reasons which cannot be gone into here. Cf. the texts and the interpretation given in my Hebrew "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 184 ff., 199 ff., and, most recently, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 254 f.

⁷² Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 128 f. [64b f.]. The excursus opens with a reverent note by the copyist: טוביהו בנו של רבי אליעזר הרב זכרנו לברכה אמר: אמר שנקראת שבוע של יוצאי השבת עם באי השבת והם המשמרות המתחדשים בכל שבוע וכן לענין יובלות אומר (ויקר' ב"ה ח) וספרת לך שבע שבתות שנים כל שבעה שנים נקרא שבת. וכן כל שבעה ימים נקראים שבת. ונקראים שבוע. שנאמר (בר' כ"ט כז) מלא שבוע זאת. והם שבעת ימי המשטה של לאה. . . אמר הכתוב כאן (ויקר' כ"ג טו) שבע שבתות ולהלן הוא אומר (רב' ט"ז ח) שבעה שבועות תזכר לך ללמדך זהו שבת זהו שבוע. אלא בזמן שמזכיר לשון שבועות מוציאו בלשון זכר שבעה. ובזמן שמזכיר לשון שבת מוציאו בלשון נקבה שבע. ללמדך שאינן שבתות ממש הנקראים אלא שבועות על ז' ימים הן שבת והן שבוע. וכן המתרגם אומר שבע שבועין. עד ממחרת השבת השביעית (ויקר' כ"ג טז) עד מבחר שבועתא שביעתא. לפיכך אמר הכתוב שבע שבתות. מיום שהתחיל למנות הן שבע שבתות. שבע שבועות. כדי לאמת שני המקראות ולא יהו שני הכתובין מכתישין זה את זה. משפטי ה' אמת צדקו יחדו (תהי' י"ט י). ואומר עד ממחרת השבת השביעית. היא השלמת השבוע השביעי. ולפי שזכר למסלה שבע שבתות לשון נקבה. אבל הרעת גותן שאינו מדבר אלא בטוף שבוע שביעי למנין העומר. כי אי אפשר לומר שמחרת השבת הוא שבת בראשית למה שאם חל יום י"ד של ניסן להיות בשבת אי אפשר להביא העומר ביום ראשון של פסח שאין השבת בהג המצות אלא קודם תג המצות. וקצירת העומר אימתי היתה אם קודם שבת הרי הוא ב"ג בניסן ואחר שתדחהו מתוך תג המצות הריני מרחה אותו לבל התורה כולה. ואם תאמר יביא העומר ליום ראשון הבא שהוא קרוב יום ב"ב כבר יצא תג המצות. ואם תדחהו תג המצות אני אדחהו לבל מחרת השבת של כל השנה בולה. עוד קצירת העומר אימתי. אם בתולו של מועד ביום עשרים בניסן וקרוב באחד בשבת שהוא יום עשרים ושנים אם בן מה נעשה מהתחל חרמש בקמה תחל לספור (דב' ט"ז ח). לפיכך אמרתי אין לך אלא מה שאמר רבותינו ז"ל ממחרת השבת ממחרת יום טוב

carried considerable weight in both sections of Byzantine Jewry. Thus, Tobias ben Moses, the older Karaite contemporary of Tobias ben Eliezer the Rabbanite, also dealt with the 'omer problem extensively. Indeed, influenced perhaps by his Rabbanite neighbors, he was the only Karaite jurist who would permit the cutting of the 'omer during the holiday.⁷³

THE CHRISTIAN EXAMPLE

The impression is gained, however, that the seriousness with which Tobias ben Eliezer viewed the Karaite campaign with regard to Shabū'oth in Byzantium was due not only to the intensity of that campaign but also to a specific aspect thereof. There is some likelihood that, in defending the traditional interpretation of the "morrow after the Sabbath" against Karaite propaganda, Byzantine Rabbinism was toying with a new argument; that argument was conspicuously absent from the polemics waged on the subject by the two factions of Jewry in the Islamic environment. At any rate, the text to be now quoted from Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* has an unprecedented ring.

"And thou shalt observe the Feast of Weeks" (Ex. 34:22)—[thou shalt observe it, says Tobias ben Eliezer] by applying the reckoning used among Israel and not that which is prevalent in the [Christian] world and which counts seven days from Sabbath to Sabbath. But, on whatever day the Passover would fall, [from that day on] thou shalt begin the count of fifty days, and the fiftieth day thou shalt sanctify [as the Festival of Shabū'oth].⁷⁴

⁷³ Cf. Aaron ben Elijah, *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Shabū'oth*, Ch. IV, 54c: החכם רבי טוביא החכם העובר ניצ השלים היות העמר נקצר ביום המועד ולא בן רעה החכמים והרין עמם. Similarly cf. Elijah Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Shabū'oth*, Ch. III, 68a, where *Oṣar Nehmad* is cited. However, as result of Bashyachi's unwarranted attribution of Tobias' *Oṣar Nehmad* to Yeshū'ah ben Yehudah, the latter, too, is credited, along with Tobias, with having allegedly permitted the cutting of the 'omer during the holiday. See on the problem my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 48 f., note 17. See also Zucker's note, *PAAJR*, XX (1951), Hebrew Section, 6, note 17.

In addition to the above arguments, the Rabbanite Tobias ben Eliezer also offers an alleged precedent, reported in the Book of Joshua: ויאכלו (יא) ויהושע ה' יא) מעבור הארץ ממחרת הפסח היאך לא אמר ממחרת השבת. אלא ללמדך שהוא מחרת יום טוב בטי' בניסן.

This proof from the Joshua text, based on the very same verse which led the Karaites to exactly opposite conclusions, is repeated in Tobias' Commentary on Exodus, 115 [58a], with clearly polemical overtones: ואימתי היה זה ממחרת הפסח בששה. מבאן תשובה לאומרים ספירת העומר ממחרת השבת שהוא עשר בניסן רבתיב (שם) ממחרת הפסח מצות וקלוי. מבאן תשובה לאומרים ספירת העומר ממחרת השבת שהוא שבת בראשית, שהרי הבתוב אומר ממחרת הפסח ולא ממחרת השבת. See also Zucker, *op. cit.*, 7 f., and the notes thereto.

Cf. further the Byzantine Karaite *Yehi Me'ōroth* which came in answer to Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* (see above, 263, note 35): בי הקראים (= הקראים) בי יביאר ראייה בי יהיה זה השבת הוא אחר הפסח בעניין יהושע — 95, bottom).

⁷⁴ *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Exodus, 208 [104b]: לחשבון שהוא (שמי' ל'ר בב). לחשבון שהוא

The fact that Tobias deemed it necessary to repudiate the *Christian* reckoning of the Seven Weeks also, in addition to his rejection of a similar practice by his Karaite neighbors, is significant indeed. It may perhaps point to the fact that the sectaries in Byzantium were invoking the Greek Orthodox Pentecost, falling invariably on the seventh Sunday after Easter, as a kind of practical confirmation of the Karaite position in the matter. But chances are that the argument was tossed by the Rabbanites rather, the latter having found it expedient to let the implication of Christian-Karaite *kinship* (and not mere *resemblance* of practices) grow in the minds of their members. This system of innuendo, as we have seen it and as will become even more apparent in the last chapter of this study, proved a powerful weapon in interdenominational polemics.

As a matter of fact, the consciousness, *in both factions of Jewry*, of the similarity between Christianity and Karaism in the fixing of Pentecost on a Sunday is evidenced by several sources. It is well attested to in the former Byzantine provinces of the Ottoman Empire as late as the sixteenth century. Indeed, even the Karaites themselves quoted Rabbanite texts to this effect.⁷⁵ True, in these later presentations no actual borrowing was ever implied, so far as our Karaite-cited texts go; only the resemblance of interpretation with regard to the pertinent scriptural passage was stressed.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the emphatic repudiation of the Christian example by the late eleventh-century Rabbanite leader in Byzantium cannot be considered accidental. It brings to mind the sarcastic comment of the anonymous author of "A Polemical Work Against Karaites and Other Sectaries," accusing the Karaites of religious syncretism dictated by sheer opportunism. Just as they found it expedient, alleges the said controversialist, to accept from the Muslims the principle of lunar observation, so they deemed it worthwhile to "enter into agreement with Edom [i.e., with Christianity]" on the problem of the "morrow after the Sabbath."⁷⁷

לישראל ולא בחשבון הנוהג בעולם משבת לשבת שבעה ימים, אלא כאשר יבוא לך הפסח כן תעשה לך ספירת חמשים יום וחקרת יום חמשים.

⁷⁵ Cf., e.g., Kaleb Afendopolo, as reported from his *'Asarah Ma'amaroth in Dod Mordecai*, 2a, and Joseph Beghi, as quoted from his *Iggereth Kiryah Ne'emanah* by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 306 f. Both cite a passage to this effect from *Liwyath Hen* of the thirteenth-century Rabbanite, Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche (see next note).

⁷⁶ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 307: החכם ר' לוי בן אברהם בעל לזית חן... בפרק ב' מהמאמר: השלישי כשספר קבע חג הנוצרים ביום ראשון לעולם ואמר וטעם קבעם החג לעולם יום ראשון שהם הבינו ממחרת השבת שבת וכן הבינו הצדוקים והקראים.

⁷⁷ Cf. the text published by Mann, *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921-22), 123-50, esp. 140

This impression becomes even more real when coupled with our information on the general concern of different segments of the populations in Byzantium and the Near East in matters of calendar. Indeed, the interest of Christians and Jews (including Karaites) in each others' calendation went far beyond the limits of neighborly curiosity. On the one hand, we have the report of Yaḥya of Antioch, concerning Christian reliance on the Jewish calendar for determining the date of Easter, and the story of the great rift in the eastern Christian world (in 1007) over the date of that festival.⁷⁸ Linked with that incident is the reference of the Armenian chronicler, Matthew of Edessa, to the Jew, Moses of Cyprus, who was summoned by the Emperor as consultant in this intra-Christian controversy.⁷⁹ On the other hand, as we shall show later in this volume, the twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite, Yehūdāh Hadassī, searching for a solution to Karaite calendar difficulties in the wake of the First and Second Crusades, actually suggested that the Karaites inquire into the date of the Christian Easter and thus gain an additional clue for the correct dating of their own festival.⁸⁰

THE BYZANTINE ABJURATION FORMULA

In this connection it may be of interest to note the Byzantine formula of abjuration which was imposed on Hebrews entering the Christian faith.⁸¹ A version of the formula, dated 1027 C.E., deals also with Jewish holidays which the convert is ordered to renounce. The holidays are listed there both in the course of a series of anathemas and in a separate explanatory appendix.⁸² True, much of the text is taken over verbatim

(Eng. tr., 147): כִּי אִמְרוּ, כִּרְתוּנוּ בְרִית אֵת מוֹבְדְלֵי בְנֵי יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל בְּרֵאִיִּת הִירַח וְדוֹבְרִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: וְעַם אֲדוּם: עֲשִׂינוּ חֻזָּה עַל וּסְפָרְתָם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשְּׁבֹעַ.

⁷⁸ J. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev (ed.), *Histoire de Yaḥya-ibn-Sa'īd d'Antioche* (Arabic text and French translation), in *Patrologia Orientalis*, XXIII, No. 5, 481 ff. (separate pagination, 273 ff.). Yaḥya states: "It is well known that the calculation of the Christian Easter is based on the Jewish Passover; on whatever weekday the latter will fall, the Christians will celebrate their festival on the Sunday thereafter." He then describes the controversy in the year 1007 as it affected the Christians of Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

⁷⁹ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 61, 185, No. 127. This expert on calendation was undoubtedly a Rabbanite.

⁸⁰ See in the next chapter, note 102, our quotations from *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76b-c, Alphabet 188, and 76d f., Alphabets 189-190, where the unique term *pesaḥ ummoth* is used to denote the Christian Easter.

⁸¹ See above, 26 f.

⁸² Cf. V. N. Beneshevich, "On the History of the Jews in Byzantium, VI-X Cent." (Russian, with Greek text), *Evreiskaia Mysl*, II (1926), 197 ff., 305 ff.; cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 173 ff., No. 121; and, earlier, Krauss, "Eine byzantinische Abschwörungsformel," *Festschrift i Anledning af Professor David Simonsens*, 134 ff. See

from similar Byzantine formulae of earlier dates.⁸³ Likewise, many items—mere carry-overs from antiquated Christian conceptions of Judaism—are colored by biblical archaisms and show little awareness of later developments in the Jewish religion. Yet, woven through the eleventh-century text, we find a definite tendency towards what could perhaps be identified as “Karaitic” or, in all events, non-normative terminology. Two instances of this nature have already been noted by scholars: a) a reference in the Greek text to the imposition of the *Yōm Kippūr* fast even on children—a practice demanded by Karaite law;⁸⁴ and b) the use in the abjuration formula of the term *λειπανάβατον* for unleavened bread which, perhaps by sheer coincidence, occurs also in the Byzantine Karaite commentary *Sefer ha-‘Osher* of Jacob ben Reuben.⁸⁵ However, upon closer scrutiny, many more points of contact with Karaite usage can be detected.

In the first place, when elaborating on the Jewish calendar, the document follows the Karaite order of months (which, in turn, adheres to the Bible), beginning the count of Jewish festivals with the *Nisan* holidays, instead of the Rabbanite sequence commencing with *Tishri*. This order is preserved in all Karaite *Books of Precepts*. Secondly, it distinguishes, like all Karaite codes down to the late Middle Ages, between the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Ḥag ham-Maṣṣoth*) and Passover (*Pesaḥ*). Inconsistently, however, the formula counts separately also the Sacrifice of the Lamb, whereas this is precisely what *Pesaḥ* stands for. Possibly, a confusion occurred here with the Samaritan custom of actually sacrificing the Paschal lamb; the latter was mistakenly included in the document as an independent entry. Another familiar feature of Karaite terminology is the introduction into the abjuration formula of the appellation “Feast of Trumpets” (*Yōm Terū‘ah*) for the Rabbanite *Rōsh hash-Shanah*, i.e., the Jewish New Year.⁸⁶ In the same vein, we note the omission of

also J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, App. III, 394 ff., for various formulae of “Professions of Faith Extracted from Jews on Baptism.” A short Byzantine formula is given there on pp. 397 f.

⁸³ Beneshevich dates the original text back in the times of Justinian, but admits that important accretions belong to the eleventh century. Cf. also Starr, “An Eastern Christian Sect, the Athinganoi,” *Harvard Theological Review*, XXIX (1936), 100.

⁸⁴ Cf. Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 180 (see also earlier, 66 f.). Cf. further the special paragraph *ובטנים הדבור בילדים* in Levi ben Yefeth’s treatment of *Yōm Kippūr*, Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 90a.

⁸⁵ Cf. the printed edition of *Sefer ha-‘Osher*, Section Proverbs, 2b, where the comment on Prov. 12:27 contains the same Greek expression *λειπανάβατον* in Hebrew transliteration. See on it Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 179.

⁸⁶ Cf., for instance, the text cited below, 283 f., note 92, and the English excerpt in Nemoj’s *Karaite Anthology*, 172 ff.

Hanukkah, a festival ignored by the Karaites because of its post-biblical promulgation.⁸⁷ Finally, included in the list is the archaic institution of Jubilee (*Yöbel*). This obviously does not figure as a practical item in the Karaite calendar; yet, it invariably follows the chapter on holidays even in the late medieval Karaite codes.⁸⁸

Apart from the list of holidays, which is strongly reminiscent of the Karaite calendar and terminology, one should also note the specific anathemas which the abjuration ceremony invokes against "every Hebrew custom and ceremony not handed down by Moses," and against those who teach "anything other than Mosaic law. . . terming it traditional." Chances are, of course, that such anathema should be read in the context of Justinian's mid-sixth-century *novella* which carried an interdiction of the *deuterosis*. Still, the wording of the paragraph strikes one as closely related to *later* pronouncements of Karaite opponents of the Oral Law.⁸⁹ Significant, too, is the specific inclusion of phylacteries in

⁸⁷ Cf., e.g., the hitherto unpublished section of *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Numbers, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 73a (commenting on Num. 22:23): לכן לא נאמין להנוכה של רבני כי בימי יוון בטלה גבוהה ולא יעשה יי' אות על יד שאינו נביא צדק.

⁸⁸ Thus, the late fifteenth-century Kaleb Afendopolo, who furnished an extensive supplement to the unfinished code of his master Elijah Bashyachi, composed a detailed section on the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee (*Addereth Eliyyahü*, Section *Shemittah we-Yöbel*, 175c–193d). In his introduction, Afendopolo states emphatically that the laws of Jubilee should come as a natural continuation of the laws dealing with the holidays, and supports his view through a reference to a similar arrangement in an older Karaite work. Cf. *Addereth Eliyyahü*, 175b: בתחלה נבאר דין שמטה ויובל היותם חללים בזמן ומקומם היה ראוי להיות אחר דין זמני המועדים אחר שמיני עצרה שהוא טופס כמו שהם מסדרים בספר הישר (or, shall we read התורה, thus pointing to the proximity of the laws of festivals in Lev. 23 and the laws of Jubilee in Lev. 25?). Similarly, compare in Aaron ben Elijah's fourteenth-century code, *Gan 'Eden*, 66c-d.

The system of discussing the laws of Jubilee in contiguity with the laws of the calendar and the festivals was apparently of Palestinian origin. Unlike the non-Palestinian *Ḳirkisānī*, who considered the subject-matter in the context of Jewish dietary and agrarian laws (cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, V, 1250 ff.), the Palestinian Levi ben Yefeth placed the Jubilee theme immediately following the chapter on *Shemini 'Asereth*. Cf. Leiden MS Warner No. 22, beginning with 96a, bottom (הדבור בשמטה) (וביובל). Levi introduces, however, the problem with the following remark: דע כי ראיתי לדבר בהם [= בשמטה וביובל] דבר מקוצר מפני כי אינם מצדד הגלות somewhat another authority excerpted in Byzantium; cf. above, 181, note 50).

On *Yöbel* see also the *Ex.-Lev. Anonymous*, Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 433a ff. (and the messianic allusions there, 433b, 435a), in connection with Lev. 25:8 ff.

⁸⁹ It should, of course, be remembered that Justinian's *novella* came in response to a plea of some Jews in sixth-century Byzantium. For an English translation of *Novella* No. 146, cf. J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, App. II, 392 f., and P. Kahle, *The Cairo Genizah*, App. I to Ch. I, 33 ff. Cf. also M. Avi-Yonah, *Bi-Ymē Rōma u-Bizantyon*, 181 f., and S. W. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, I, 191, 230. Indeed, most recently, Baron suggested that "perhaps harking back to some residua of those Jewish opponents of Oral Law who had elicited Justinian's harsh

the anathema against witchcraft, amulets, etc., which may be a repercussion of Karaite argumentation against the wearing of phylacteries and amulets, and against other traditional folkways prevalent among the Rabbanites.⁹⁰ (Even calendar calculations were often brought by Karaite polemicists under the common denominator of witchcraft.⁹¹)

Of course, it is very likely that each or most of the points in the formula, if standing alone, could be explained away by reasons other than Byzantine Christian familiarity with Karaite praxis. Nevertheless, the cumulative evidence of the text is certainly impressive. In the absence of any direct Greek references to Karaism, the aggregate of non-normative practice and terminology, resounding from the formula just discussed, recovers at least an echo of the inevitable contacts between the Christian Byzantine population or institutions and local Jewry of both brands. The fact that this echo is faint and incomplete and that the impression which Karaism left on non-Jewish observers in the Empire was confused, though quite unmistakable, may perhaps serve as a measure of Karaism's true position amid its neighbors in Byzantium.

FURTHER DIVERGENCES

The differences between the Byzantine Karaites and Rabbanites found a persistent expression also in many other details of worship. Again, Tobias ben Eliezer the Rabbanite considered it his duty to swiftly ward off any Karaite invasion and to come forward vigorously in defense of the traditional practice. A few instances of such practical controversy within Byzantine Jewry will suffice in this connection.

Thus, most of the Karaites opposed in Byzantium, much as they did in the Islamic countries, the blowing of the *shōfar* on the Jewish New Year. They insisted that the biblical *terū'ah*, meaning shouts as well as blasts of trumpets, could in the case of the Jewish New Year point only to shouts, i.e., to vocal prayer, since the use of musical instruments would necessarily entail the desecration of the holiday (through work).⁹² Tobias ben Eliezer could not help admitting that the Karaite inter-

prohibition of the Jewish *deuterosis*, this sect [i.e., the Karaites] must have enjoyed a modicum of good will on the part of the Byzantine rulers." Cf. his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 272.

⁹⁰ Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 55 ff.

⁹¹ E.g., Daniel al-Kūmisī, in Harkavy's *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 189: ואין מותר לנו לדרוש חדשי ירי ומעדין בחשבון הקוסמים והוברי שמים בפירושי' הדחו עדי' באמני', עד הנאמן לחדשי' ועד לאביב: Similarly, Hadassī, in *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 43c, Alphabet 104: לשני' בחשבון הקוסמי' והמעונגי'.

⁹² Cf. the hitherto unpublished section of Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Numbers 29: 1, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 75b: יום תרועה. הלל חודות או תרועה חצוצרות:

pretation was in keeping with one of the legitimate meanings of the term in question. Still, he contended, in the context of other *terū'oth* prescribed for the same month (of Tishri), such as that which heralded the proclamation of the Jubilee Year with blasts of trumpets, the different meaning ascribed by the Karaites to the *terū'ah* of the New Year could not have been intended by the Lawmaker. Hence, it is wise and correct to rely on the ancient mishnaic tradition which offered detailed instructions, along with mnemonic formulae, regulating the triple blowing of the ram's horn on *Rōsh hash-Shanah*.⁹³

As if in answer to Tobias' arguments, the twelfth-century Karaite of Constantinople, Yehūdah Hadassi, assaults these very regulations, drawn up by the talmudic sages, as a drastic example of Rabbinic deviation from the Written Word:

Likewise [exclaims Hadassi], your shepherds have fixed mnemonic formulae and heaped on them things which they never heard of and never saw in their own days and which also the Divine Prophets never conceived in their vision when prophesying in their [respective] times, but which are a "commandment of men learned by rote" (Is. 29:13) stemming from their early [mishnaic] mentors.... And how dare you come and maintain that the Mishnah and the Talmud are from the Lord, and how dare you proclaim, '[This and that are] rules laid down by Moses at Sinai'?! This is an outright deceit on the part of your shepherds!⁹⁴

Of no less practical consequence was the difference between the two factions with regard to the "four species" chosen by the Divine Lawgiver from the Palestinian flora in commemoration of the Festival of Booths. While the Rabbanites insisted on symbolic waving of the *lūlab* and the *ethrōg*, the Karaites viewed the "four species" as actual materials for the building of the *sukkah* itself.⁹⁵ To support their opinion, the Karaites mustered the literal meaning of the biblical verses on the subject and

או תרועה בקול, כי לא זכר תרועת הצוצרות ולא שופרות. לכן יסתפקו הקראים רובם ולא יכו כשופר בזה היום שלא יחללו המועד.

⁹³ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 131 [66a]: ש"ת תר"ח תר"ח ג': למיכך נהגו ישראל לחקוע תשר"ת תשר"ת תר"ח ג' ובענין חיובל בחוש השביעי ביום הכפורים, אנו למדים כל תרועות של חורש השביעי שיהו בשופר וילמר סתום ממפורש.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 86b, Alphabet 225: קבעו עור רועיך סימנים והרבו כם מה שלא שמעו: ולא דאו בימיהם, ולא השיגו ראות נביאי ה' בנבואתם בזמניהם, כ"א [=כי אם] ממצות אנשים מלומדה מראשונהם [אלולון = חכמי המשנה]... ואיך אתם אומרים כי המשנה ותלמוד מה' ואמרתם הלכה למשה מסיני זו מרמה מרועיך. צריחת וצעקת קולות התרועה לא שמעו מפי הנביאים ולא השיגו ואיך הורו זה תקיעה ושלשה שברים תרועה, תקיעה שלשה שברים תרועה להגו, סימנים תשר"ת תר"ח במספריך.

For the Karaite application of Isa. 29:13 ("commandment of men learned by rote") to Rabbinic doctrines and writings, cf. Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ, in Pinsker, *Likḳūṣē*, App. III, 21: מצות אנשים מלומדה הם דברי משנה ותלמוד ואגדה: Cf. also the texts adduced below, Chapter VII, e.g., notes 41, 45.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 86d, Alphabet 225: ביטו רועיך עוד בפירוש פרי עץ הדר (ו) כמות: תמרי' וענף עץ עבות וערבי נחל (ויק' כ"ג מ) ארבעה מינים, פירשו אתרוגיין לולבין והדסין וערבין דנחל

invoked the historical precedents already recorded by the Bible.⁹⁶ The Rabbanites were thus forced to fall back on the familiar argument calling for reliance on talmudic tradition: Such customs as waving of the *lūlab*, blowing the *shōfar*, etc., including their minutest details as observed by generations of Jews although not stated explicitly in the Bible, are not “commandments of men learned by rote.” Indeed, they are no less binding than the clearly formulated written laws, since they all were transmitted to posterity through God’s oral communication to Moses at Sinai.⁹⁷ Thus, recurrent matters of practical divergence were bound to provoke again and again the endless interdenominational discussion concerning the unbroken authority of the Oral Law:

Now [says Tobias ben Eliezer], it is with regard to such [practices], not written in the Torah, that you should “ask thy father and he will declare unto thee, thine elders and they will tell thee” (Deut. 32:7). For these [practices] have been reliably transmitted one generation to another, [showing] how Jews used to observe the blowing of the *shōfar*, the shaking of the *lūlab*, [ritual] slaughter as well as inspection [of the slaughtered animals] and the cleansing of the meat. [The same holds true for] the formulae of legal documents, the *ḥaliṣah*, levirate marriage, divorce, *ṣiṣith* and *mezūzah*, phylacteries and prayer, and the fowl which we eat but whose names are not listed in the Torah. All those matters form a [reliable] tradition in Jewry, for the Sages of Israel were never divided concerning them. And he who has no regard for the glory of his Maker and likes to turn everything upside down, such a person does violence to his own soul. Of him it is stated (Prov. 11:29), “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind.” And it is stated futher (Prov. 28:24), “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother. . . is the companion of a destroyer”—in other words, he is a companion of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who corrupted Israel.⁹⁸

DIETARY INJUNCTIONS

Among the themes which were inextricably woven into the debate over the validity of oral tradition and whose practical repercussions resounded

מהנהגתי: בטולת ביר תפוש' למעלה ולמטה בשואות מימין ומשמאל ומזבלות בארבע פנות העולם מרבעי אשר לא צוה ה' אלהיך: אלוסי משכילי בני מקרא נ"ע אמרו להם: רחפו כל עצמותינו בשמענו הוראות כאלה באזנינו: פרי עץ הדר שפירשת' אתרוגין לולבין והדסין אשר לא רמזו כזו נביאינו: וכבר לא ראינו נביאי' ולא רוח הקדש בפיהם כחזינו: ואיך קבעת' כזה לדורותינו: הנעזוב רברי הנביאי' ונתפרוש [צ"ל: ונתפרוש] The Karaite interpretation of the pertinent verse (Lev. 23:40) is: [עץ=עץ] וענף ע"ע [צ"ל: תמרים] ונתן ע"ע [צ"ל: תמרים] לעשות סכות [עבות] (ibid., Alphabet 226).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, invoking the story of the celebration of the Festival of Booths in the days of Ezra as a binding precedent and as an illustration of the correct interpretation of scriptural intention: לקחת ארבעת המינים] כי הכרעת מאמר עזרא מוכרע על זה בדעתך אינו אלא על עשיית סכות במינים הנזכרי' . . . כי הכרעת מאמר עזרא מוכרע על זה בדעתך

ואין אלו המצות ממצות אנשים מלומדה אלא קבלה: [66a] 131 Cf. *Leḥaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 131 [66a] . . . ממש רבינו מפי הגבורה שאין לסור מהן ומן רשאל שהי חכמים הראשונים מטרם לחכמים אחרונים. Tobias' use of the biblical phrase מצות אנשים מלומדה, in the sense developed in the sectarian jargon, is highly significant.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: ועל כאלה שלא בתורה שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך שהם קבלה בישראל דור אחר דור היאך היו ישראל נוהגין בתקיעות השופר ובנענוע הלולב ובשחיטה ובבדיקה ובניקוי הבשר ובתיקון שטרות

in the everyday relations within the Jewish quarter was the problem of ritually clean food. Indeed, *sheḥiṭah*, or ritual slaughter, and *bediḳkah*, i.e., the proper examination of slaughtered animals, formed two sore points of controversy between the Karaites and the Rabbanites, in Byzantium no less than anywhere else.

The sectaries argued that certain animals, such as those pregnant, were prohibited; they, accordingly, hesitated to patronize Rabbanite butchers, lest prohibited meat be sold to them by the latter along with that which was ritually unobjectionable. At the same time, they dispensed with the *bediḳkah* altogether, thus leaving all meat handled by Karaite butchers open to Rabbanite suspicion. Hence, apart from the purely religious principle involved, there was a distinctive economic edge to the problem which could not fail to embitter the daily contacts between the two factions of Jewry on the local level. It undoubtedly also marred social relations between neighbors, since scrupulous Karaites would refrain from attending Rabbanite meals, and vice versa.⁹⁹

In addition, there is the communal aspect to be considered.¹⁰⁰ Supervision of ritual slaughter was a basic religio-communal service which any and all Jewish communities endeavored to offer to their membership even under the most trying circumstances. However, as with many other communal services, such supervision had become in time a considerable source of power to the governing institutions of the community (and, through them, to the particular circles exerting influence over these institutions) as well as an important lever for communal control. This was so not only because complexities of the meat inspection system and the intricate laws of slaughter tended to institutionalize *sheḥiṭah u-bediḳkah* and leave the performance in the hands of specializing functionaries, guided by distinctive vested interests; but also because of the wide range of autonomous functions assumed by the Jewish community within the medieval corporate system. Such prerogatives as allocation of shops in the market, where food, prices and weights were supervised by communal officials, establishment of public *abattoirs* in larger communities and supervision of individual *shōḥeṭim* in smaller localities, etc., turned the preparation of ritually acceptable meat into a communal monopoly.

ובחליצה ויבומין וגטין וצציה ומזוזות ותפלין ותפלה ועל עופות שלא כחובין שמן בתורה ואנחנו אוכלין אותן, כל אלה קבלה בישראל, שלא נחלקו חכמי ישראל עליהם, ומי שאינו חס על כבוד קונו ורוצה לדבר תהפוכות הרי הוא חומס נפשו ועליו נאמר מוכר ביתו ינחל רוח, ואומר בחל אביו האמו וכי חבר הוא לאיש משחית, חבר הוא לירבעם בן נבט שהשחית את ישראל.

⁹⁹ Cf. on it, most recently, Baron's comments, in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 249, and 405, note 49.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. on the subject in general, Baron, *The Jewish Community*, II, 107 ff.

The imposition of communal taxes on various stages of the preparatory process made communal control even more pronounced.

In view of the above, the conflict between Karaites and Rabbanites in the field of ritual slaughter and dietary laws, overtly prompted by divergences of legal opinion, yet actually reflecting the clash of communal and economic interests, comes as no surprise. The fact that accounts of sharp feuds in the matter reach us only from tenth- and eleventh-century Palestine by no means indicates the absence of similar clashes elsewhere.¹⁰¹ It shows merely that in such places as Ramlah the Karaites were strong enough numerically and politically to vie successfully with the Rabbanites for control of communal institutions and of their public services, or, at least, to gain freedom from Rabbanite interference. In localities in which the sectaries constituted a small minority, the struggle seldom attained a degree warranting governmental intervention or prompting the initiation of intercommunal correspondence on the subject. Characteristically, in such cases the Karaites would resort mostly to persuasion and to polemics on purely religious grounds. It is, then, no coincidence that, in the course of his anti-Karaite debate, the Byzantine Rabbanite spokesman, Tobias ben Eliezer, was careful to reiterate specifically ritual slaughter and meat inspection as traditional observances which could be traced directly to the Mosaic legislation at Sinai.¹⁰²

CONSUMPTION OF FAT-TAIL

In the same category also belongs the controversy with regard to the consumption of the fat-tail (*alyah*), a subject to which Tobias ben Moses (the Karaite!) devoted many pages of learned and vehement argumentation in his hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Nehmad* on Leviticus.¹⁰³ Conversely, the lengthy anti-Karaite polemic in the Rabbinic *Leḳaḥ Tōb* was undoubtedly prompted by Karaite criticism.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the Rabbanite protagonist, Tobias Eliezer, may have actually had in mind the scores of pages of incisive analysis and biting ridicule to which the Rabbanite position on the problem of *alyah* was subjected by Tobias ben Moses,

¹⁰¹ For such conflicts in Palestine cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 62 ff. There, Mann's earlier research in the matter is also listed.

¹⁰² Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Deuteronomy, 5 [3a]: ואצוה אתכם (דב' א' ח). אלו דקדוקי המצוה: שנחגו בקבלה, כגון שמיטה וניקוי הבשר ושאר המצוות שהם קבלה בישראל.

See also the list of traditional observances invoked by Tobias in the passage cited above, 285, and note 98.

¹⁰³ Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 25b f., and especially 83b-100b. See below, 288, note 105.

¹⁰⁴ *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 16 f. [8b f.]. The editor correctly remarked *ad loc.* that Tobias' paraphrastic restatement of the Rabbinic position has come as an answer to Karaite exposés on the subject.

the Karaite, in his *Oṣar Neḥmad*.¹⁰⁵ The importance attached to these details was such as to warrant a specific stipulation in marriage contracts drawn up in the cases of mixed marriages between Karaites and Rabbanites. This stipulation was so formulated that the dietary scruples of either party would be duly respected.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ The main target of Tobias ben Moses' criticism is Saadyah Gaon. But he also combats the views of the sectarian group of Mishawites who lived in Byzantium at that time (see on them in the last chapter of the present volume).

Saadyah's invectives against the Karaites in connection with their prohibition of the *alyah* meet here with Tobias' harsh rejoinder. Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 87b: דע כי אש' אמ' [= סעדיה] כי הקושרים בדו בדורו זה הרבר כי האליה אסורה כאש' בארנו במקומות הרבה מן תכונות הראיות לבעלי מק' [רא] על דבריהם אש' הראו ראיות בהם מן תורת יר' ית'ש, ראינה גלויה בי בעלי מקרא אינם קושרים ולא ברו מלבם כאש' אמרו. אבל הם ההולכים אחרי תורת יי' ית'ש העושים מצוותיו המתמידים עליהם יומם ולילה. ומי שהוא באלה הספורים וזה דרכם וצורתם אינם קושרים ולא בורים אבל כבר בארנו בתחלת דברינו: And again: הקושרים והבורים והמתעים הם מי שאר' בחלוף תורת יי' ויצא ממנה מן הראיות (ש) הראיות שהראו בע' [לי] מקרא זיל על אסור האליה אש' יגלה ויראה באסור החלבים אש' יאכל זה האיש הפיתומי [= סעדיה] התרעה והמתעה הוא ורעיו ואנשיו ראיות חזקות וגלויות מכוארות ונתקיימו דבריהם והתחמו והושלמו. וגם זכרנו מקצ' מה שנתלו בו רעיו על התר החלבים האסורים וביארנו בטולו ושיחוחו. ואנו נזכיר מה שנתלה בו זה חוד הפיתומי הנער המצדי בדבריו בזה העניין, ו[ביארנו?] שיחוחו חיודו למען שידעו עם יי' וכל איש בעל שכל ובינה כי הוא ורעיו הממעים הסומכים על הפרגה והספיקות ולא חכמינו בעלי מק' המשיבים רבים מעון אש' הם משכילי גלות.

Or further, on fol. 90a: חזה יבאר לכם כי לא השיב זה האיש הפיתומי על דברי חכמינו בעלי מק' כי האליה והבליות והיתרת מובחרים כי יי' ית'ש אסרם... אשר יאכל אותם זה הבער ורעיני האויילים בי לולי גבלותו ומיעוט רעתו לא היה יעלה בדעתו להשיב עליהם בדבר שהוא מדבריהם ורתם ונתרעד כי זה האיש הממרה הוא אש' לא יתכן ואינו ראוי להניחו על כל אודות: And on fol. 92b: על גבוכתו ובבלולו וטפשותו בפת[רון] חלב אבל יחייב על מה שיעמר על מלת חלב על אשר נקדם בו דברינו. ודברו הוא בשח' חלב הוא המבולבל והגבוך. ודברי בעלי מק' בעניי' החלב הם מותמרים ומקיימים גלינו וביארנו מבוכתך וטפשותך בדבר החלב: And again, 98a-b: שבה לאל והוראה לשמו הגדול והרסנו ונחצנו כלל מה שחצת ובקשת בו לטעון ולערער תואנה ועילה על דברי האומ' באיסור הכליות והאליה כי הם מן החלבים כאש' נחייב עליך וירשיעך שתורה לנו כי הכליות ואליה חלב והשלום על דברנו כי הם אסורים מן החלבים של בקד והצאן בדבור יי' שאמ' כל חלב שור וכשב ועז ל"ח [= לא תאכלו]. ולו היית ירא מיי' ית'ש הולך אחר האמת היה טוב לך מאש' הלכת ונדבקת אחר זולתו ובזה יתגדל הכאב עליך למען כי נחרס דתך ואסור ששאר עליך מן אכילת הכליות והאליה אש' קשה ויצער עליך עזיבתם. ובארנו כי אין בידך חזק ולא יהיה לך זכות לאש' אתה בוטח ונשען עליו מאלה הדרכים והגדלת אש' קבלת להם בלא עיון ובלא דרישה וחקירה לאש' יאמ' ולא נתנך יי' לב לדעת ואזנים לשמע ולהבדיל בין האמת והשקר ולהפריד בין הטוב והרע ולמאוס הבטל והשוא ולבחור המקייים והצדק. אבל הלכת אחרי התהו אש' ונתבאר[ן]: Tobias concludes then, 99a: אין בו חזק ואבלוגן [εὐλογία] בהסגלת אלה ולא בזולתו לך כאש' אמרנו מן שיחוח וביטול כל מה שחפץ ובקש זה הפיתומי לטעון ולערער ריב ומדון על דברי בעלי מק' באסור הכליות והאליה. וליי' התשועה והעזרה. ולו השבח וההודאה

¹⁰⁶ Cf. the *kethubboth* cited in the next chapter, notes 15–17, in connection with special stipulations regarding the calendar. Thus, the standard formula of a *kethubbah*, used in eleventh-century Fustāṭ for cases of a Rabbanite marrying a Karaite lady, would demand of the bridegroom "that he should not bring the fat-tail into his house as long as she [i.e., the Karaite woman] is his wife." See the text there, note 15. Also, when the Rabbanite Nasi, David, the son of the Palestinian gaon Daniel ben 'Azaryah, married in 1082 the daughter of a Karaite potentate of Fustāṭ, he bound himself in the marriage contract "not to compel this wife of his to . . . eat the *alyah*, etc." Cf. the passage below, Chapter VII, note 17, reproduced from *JQR* (O.S.), XIII (1899–1900), 221. No comparable texts from Byzantium have, so far as I know, been found to date and published. See more on these *kethubboth* in the notes to the next chapter.

Characteristically, we do not find in the work of Tobias ben Eliezer any allusion to the Karaite legislation permitting the consumption of the meat of fowl with milk (*besar 'of be-ḥalab*). This point was, as can be gathered from several Genizah letters, the cause of great animosity between the two factions in eleventh-century Palestine.¹⁰⁷ It is difficult to decide, however, whether the fact that Tobias ben Eliezer limited himself to a mere repetition of the talmudic discussion of the pertinent verses (Ex. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21), without so much as hinting at actual Karaite practice, is accidental, or indicates Karaite adjustment in Byzantium to the Rabbanite interdiction of preparing the meat of fowl in milk.

MARITAL LAWS

Opinions diverged also in the interpretation of marital laws as reflected or commanded by Scripture. Especially the laws governing levirate marriage (*yibbūm*) lent themselves to incessant controversy. The Karaites dissented over the literal meaning insisted upon by Rabbinic exegesis with regard to that biblical decree. They shifted the duty of the levirate from the brother to a mere relative, since they could not envisage the possibility that the Lawmaker had actually imposed on the surviving blood-brother what they considered an incestuous union with his brother's childless widow. The Karaite critique drew vigorous replies in Byzantium from the oft-quoted Tobias ben Eliezer in defense of the Rabbinic law.¹⁰⁸

Curiously, the problem of bigamy also loomed large in the interdenominational debates, with the Rabbanites pointing to the frequent instances of bigamy among leading biblical personalities as proof of the perfect legitimacy of bigamous marriage.¹⁰⁹ The intensity of Rabbanite defense in the matter is the more astonishing in view of the inevitably academic character of the issue: Roman (hence Byzantine) legislation outlawed bigamy, making all citizens of the Empire, their religious affiliation notwithstanding, irrevocably bound by that proscription.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ See on it most recently S. D. Goitein, "A Caliph's Decree in Favour of the Rabbanite Jews in Palestine," *JJS*, V (1954), 118 ff., and the literature listed there.

¹⁰⁸ *Lekah Tōb* on Genesis, 192 [96b]: והקם זרע לאחיו (בר' ל"ח ח). מיכן חשובה לאומרים: אין היבום תלוי בנחלה שהרי עדיין לא היתה נחלה לישראל, שנאמר וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו (שם, ל"ז א), ואומר ודוד רביעי ישורו הנה (שם, ט"ז טז), ותשובה לאומרים כי ישבו אחים יחדו (דב' כ"ה ה) אל הקרובים, שהרי ער ואונן אחים מאב היו ולמדנו ייבום מיתורה, מה כאן באחיה ממש, אף להלן באחיה ממש, ברך שבוחר ברובי חכמים

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Lekah Tōb* on Leviticus, 102 [51b]: ושאמרו שתי נשים בעלמא אסורות. בירדע שאין להם לא דת ולא חוק. שהרי כמה צדיקים נשאו שתי נשים כגון אלקנה ודוד ושלמה. ובדברי הימים כמה בשתי נשים. אלא ודאי כשם שטעו בשתי נשים כן טעו בשתי אחיות בני ישבו אחים יחדו שגם אלה אחיות. רבבותינו חקרו ודרשו התורה על בוריה כנתינתה מהר סיני

¹¹⁰ Marmorstein (*Festschrift Adolf Schwarz*, 469) thinks that Tobias' stress on

Here, incidentally, we have one of the only two occasions on which Tobias ben Eliezer directly mentions the sectaries by name. Refuting the Karaite contention that bigamy was forbidden by Scripture, he exclaims:

How great is the error of the Karaites in stating that "And thou shalt not take a woman to her sister" (Lev. 18:18) refers to two [unrelated] women! It is clear [from the accounts] in the Prophets and the Hagiographa that the Israelites used to marry two [unrelated] women, as it is stated in the case of Peninnah (I Sam. 1:6).¹¹¹

PRACTICAL REPERCUSSIONS

Throughout his argumentation Tobias ben Eliezer frankly admits that his is a deliberate "reply to those who say—," or a proof that the truth is "not as maintained by those who have wandered astray."¹¹² In fact, as already mentioned, Tobias admits that he was familiar with a Karaite commentary.¹¹³ Since he probably did not know Arabic,¹¹⁴ one may assume that one or several of the *local* Hebrew Karaite compilations, produced in Byzantium in the second half of the eleventh century,

permissibility of bigamy in Judaism was provoked by adherents of a sect observing the marital laws laid down in the "Zadokite Fragment." This is, of course, in accord with Marmorstein's late dating of the document otherwise considered to stem from the period of the Second Commonwealth. On cases of bigamy among Jews under Christian rule, see I. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, 135.

¹¹¹ *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Deuteronomy, 70 [35b]: כמה טעות טעו הקראים שאמרו ואשה אל אחותה לא תקח (ויקרא י"ח י"ח), אלו שתי נשים ודבר זה בבניאיים ובכתובים שהיו נושאים שתי נשים ובפנינה כתב וכעשתה צרתה גם כעס. Cf. also Tobias' strictures on another aspect of marital relations in *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 69 f. [35a-b].

תשובה לאומרים; ולא כמו שאמרו התועים.

¹¹² See the quotation above, 215, note 33. Cf. also our remarks above, 76, note 46.

¹¹⁴ To be sure, Tobias does use Arabic in one connection. Cf. *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Exodus, 188 f. [94b f.], where Arabic terms for the twelve precious stones on the high priest's breastplate are introduced. Nevertheless, rather than suppose an actual knowledge of *Arabic* on the part of Tobias, it seems more plausible to assume that we have here technical terms, used at the time of discussion by dealers and customers all over the East Mediterranean. Were it not so, there would hardly be a point in deviating from Tobias' usual procedure of introducing *Greek* equivalents for difficult Hebrew words (see on this procedure of Tobias, Buber, *Introd. to Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Genesis-Exodus, 35 f. [18a-b], and J. Perles, "Jüdisch-byzantinische Beziehungen," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, II [1893], 574 f.), and offering, without much ado, Arabic terminology instead. The latter must have obviously been professionally known to Jewish merchants in Byzantium.

Incidentally, the Karaite Jacob ben Reuben, too, gives in the hitherto unpublished section of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, *ad loc.*, two slightly different lists of *Arabic* terms for the precious stones. Possibly by sheer coincidence, there is in the Leiden Library a MS entitled *Sefer ha-'Osher* (i.e., the Book of Riches) by a Jacob ben Reuben which deals with precious stones. Cf. Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, 106 f. and 391 f. (App. VI). This book is not identical with the commentary which we have been quoting all along in this study. Nor is there any ground for belief that the two authors going by the name Jacob ben Reuben are identical.

CALENDAR FEUDS

THE AREA most exposed to friction in the field of Karaite-Rabbanite relations was that of the not infrequent discrepancies between the differing calendars to which the two factions respectively adhered. The Rabbanite calendar in the Middle Ages was precalculated. Except for its long-range computation and for some involved problems which occasionally necessitated the decision of the authorized bodies of Jewish leadership, the calendar did not require any action on the part of the individual Rabbanite or of the average community. Not so the Karaite calendar.¹

The sectaries insisted on unwavering alertness in the field of calendation and imposed on their membership two constantly recurring mensal and annual *acts*: a) monthly witnessing of the New Moon for the sake of determining *Rōsh-Ḥodesh*, i.e., the first day of each individual month; and b) regular yearly following of reports from the Holy Land on the state of crops there. Such reports would regulate the commencement of ordinary calendar-years and the intercalation of leap-years according to the ripening of *abīb*. *Abīb*, a *terminus technicus* in the Karaite calendar

¹ For comprehensive discussions of the Karaite calendar and a Karaite critique of the Rabbanite mode of calendation, see the 21 chapters of the Seventh Discourse (*fi ru'ūs ash-shuhūr wa-ḥalab al-abīb*) of Kırkısānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār* (edited by L. Nemoj), IV, 789 ff. See further, Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 74c ff., Alphabets 183 ff.; F. Kauffmann's dissertation, *Traktat über die Neulichtbeobachtung und den Jahresbeginn bei den Karäern von Samuel b. Moses*, containing the Arabic original of the Third Discourse of the early fifteenth-century *Kitāb al-Murshid* by Samuel al-Maghribī, along with a German translation and a fragment of a Hebrew version of the work; the Sections *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh* and *Hebhdēl Shanah mish-Shanah* in the fourteenth-century code *Gan 'Eden* (3 ff.) of Aaron ben Elijah; and the Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh* in Elijah Basyachi's late fifteenth-century *Addereth Eliyyahū*, 1 ff.

New insights are provided by the hitherto unpublished *Book of Precepts* of the eleventh-century Palestinian, Levi ben Yefeth (Leiden MS Warner No. 22). The first 196 pages of the MS deal with the calendar and the festivals. Several excerpts (from a microfilm copy of the work in my possession) will be offered in the course of this chapter. The publication of the whole work would, of course, enhance greatly our knowledge of Karaism in the "Later Golden Age" and of the Palestine-oriented subsequent generations of Karaites in the Byzantine Empire.

science, denoted freshly ripened ears of barley; the maturation of that crop in Palestine symbolized the advent of spring and, with it, of a new calendar-year. Thus, when found in any of the regions of the Holy Land, the *abib* would usher in the first month of *Nisan* and a new year would be proclaimed. Conversely, a delay in the appearance of *abib* would inevitably cause intercalation of the year and would lead to postponement of festivals, in flagrant contradiction to the mathematically computed Rabbinic calendar.

THE CALENDAR: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIFT

The history of any religious sect, whatever the latter's time and brand, is to a great extent a history of its calendar deviations. For such deviations have always been the most outstanding symptoms of the sect's break with its normative environment or with the general body to which its members adhered originally.² Of course, differences of calendar are hardly the *reason* for secession; rather, they seal the separatist trend and constitute the group's *final* declaration of self-determination and independence. Nevertheless, once embarked upon, calendar divergences cease to be mere reflections of the break-up of relations between the rebellious minority and the Mother Synagogue. They themselves become active ingredients in the ever more pronounced process of estrangement of the two factions, and widen almost irreparably the *social* rift between the opposing camps.

Proximity of dwellings made the two *separate time-frameworks* governing the *basically similar socio-religious activities* of Karaites and Rabbanites a *daily* problem indeed. Imbued with a sense of an all-embracing Jewish unity, in spite of their differences, and conscious of the fateful interdependence between the status of *all* Jewry and the religious behavior of *each segment* in the Jewish society, the two neighboring parties could not help being sensitive to each other's "error" in calendation.³ Such error, they argued, caused one party to desecrate those days which to the other party were holy and which, therefore, were subject to different legislation and required different rules of

² Cf., for instance, most recently, S. Talmon's "attempt to present the calendar controversy as a decisive factor in the formation of the *Yahad* as an organized social body cut off from the Jewish community," in his "The Calendar Reckoning of the Sect from the Judaeen Desert," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [= *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV], esp. 163 f. Similarly, cf. his "Divergences in Calendar Reckoning in Ephraim and Judah," *VT*, VIII (1958), 48 ff. See also Ch. Rabin's recent *Qumrān Studies*, 77 ff., esp. 80 f.

³ See the "Historical Premises," above, esp. 36 f.

thus preserved for posterity⁶—similarly saw in the calendar division the final proclamation of sectarian counter-institutionalism.⁷ Not until he had the divergent modes of calendation explained to him, did the caliph acknowledge 'Anan's standing as an independent heresiarch.

The religion of my brother [these are the words which the Rabbanite polemicist puts in the mouth of the founder of the Karaite sect when pleading for his skin in the caliph's court] employs a calendar based upon calculation [of the time of the New Moon] and upon intercalation of [leap-years by] cycles. Mine, however, follows the [actual] observation of the New Moon and [intercalation that is regulated by the ripening of] *abib*.⁸

CALENDARY STIPULATIONS

Within the Karaite ranks proper, the adherence to the sectarian system of calendation assumed such importance that, in time, a clearly stated obligation to follow it was incorporated into the text of the Karaite marriage contract. Thus, the eleventh-century formula of *kethubboth*, current among the sectarian communities of Palestine, contained the following agreement between the bridegroom and the bride:

And further they discussed and both of them agreed to observe the festivals of God by way of lunar observation and through the finding of *abib* in the Land of Israel.⁹

⁶ Cf. *Hillūk ha-Kara'im we ha-Rabbanim*, in Pinsker's *Likkūtē Qadmoniyoth*, App. XII, 99 ff. (see above, 29, note 7).

⁷ The Rabbanite story was attributed by Pinsker and others to Saadyah Gaon. Cf. *Likkūtē*, App. XII, 98; Poznański, "Anan et ses écrits," *REJ*, XLIV (1902), 166 ff.; *idem*, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 73 f. See, however, Nemoj's scepticism in the matter, "Anan ben David—A Reappraisal of the Historical Data," *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw*, 243 ff. Nemoj assumes an eleventh- or even a twelfth-century date for the quoted account. Cf. further his *Karaite Anthology*, 4.

As far as the extant texts go, there is, indeed, no reason to assume common (Saadyanic) authorship of *both* the account quoted in *Yehi Me'ōroth* and the story cited in the *Hillūk*. Truly, there are some basic differences, if not actual contradictions, between the two reports. Since the Saadyanic origin of the first is not subject to doubt, a conclusion in the spirit of Nemoj's objections seems inescapable.

⁸ *Likkūtē*, App. XII, 103: דה אחי על חשבון ועבוד תקופות ודחי על ראית הירח והאביב. In referring to his "brother," 'Anan had in mind Ḥananyah, whom, according to the Rabbanite report, the heads of the Academies appointed to the office of exilarch as substitute for 'Anan.

The reliability of the whole story concerning the struggle for exilarchic succession was questioned recently by Nemoj. See the references to his studies in the last note. Nemoj's reservations, however, seem hardly justified. Cf. my comments above, *Introd.*, 15 f., and, most recently, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 210 f., 388 f.

⁹ The formula was published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 168 ff. Cf. esp. 170: [ועוד דנו ויתבררו שניהם על מנה שימרו אח מעדי יי' (על) בראיית הירח ובהמצא אביב בארץ ישראל]. See also Mann's general remarks there, 157 and 159.

Actual contracts, drawn up originally in the Karaite community of Jerusalem in 1028–29 and in eleventh-century Ramlah, and preserved to this day, all conform more or less literally to the above formula.¹⁰ True, no copy of a Karaite *kethubbah* from Byzantium has so far been recovered. Our only lead for the time under discussion is the report by Hadassī in his *Eshkol hak-Kofer*.¹¹ Still, though hampered by Hadassī's self-imposed literary mannerisms, such as acrostic and rhyme, the language of the passage is clear enough and undoubtedly reflects actual Byzantine usage:

We have taken upon ourselves [reads the Byzantine *kethubbah* in Hadassī's wording], as is proper, the observance of God's festivals in conformity with all His commandments, and the [seeking of the] *abib* which is to be found in the Land of Israel. A Divine oath be upon us by the Covenant of Mt. Sinai and by the Laws of Mt. Horeb (which are in the Covenant of the people).¹²

While not mentioning explicitly lunar observation—such stipulation is surely implied in “the observance of God's festivals in conformity with all His commandments”—Hadassī singled out here specifically the quest for *abib* as a religious obligation. Moreover, it seems that, however unprecise, the Hadassī text preserved the basic formula which was to be repeated by later Byzantine-inspired Karaite prayerbooks.¹³ This formula, except for one late modifying twist to be discussed later in this chapter, may, then, go back to Hadassī's time or, possibly, to the still earlier decrees of the eleventh-century Karaite leadership in Byzantium.

¹⁰ The Jerusalem *kethubbah* was published in Luncz's *Jerusalem*, VI (1903), 237 ff. Cf. esp. 238: ועור קבל עליו... (על מנת שישמר מועדי יי בראיית הירח ובתמצא אביב באיש: reproduced *in toto* in A. Gulak's *Oṣar hash-Shefaroth*, 56 f., No. 53, and partly by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 162, note 1, and by Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 107a, No. 19).

For the Karaite *kethubbah* of Ramlah, see Assaf, *Tarbiz*, IX (1937–38), 28 ff. (cf. also, 14), esp. 29: ועל מנת שישמרו את: המועדים המקודשים על דאיית הירח ומציאת האביב בארץ ישראל

For the modification of the *abib* clause in the modern Karaite *kethubbah*, see our quotation below, 343, note 117, from the modern Karaite prayerbook (Eng. version, Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 283 f., esp. 284, under F.).

¹¹ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 13b, Alphabets 9–10.

¹² *Ibid.*, Alphabet 10: שמוע ה' עלינו בברית הר סיני ובחקי חורב בברית עמאל. שבועת ה' עלינו בברית הר סיני ובחקי חורב בברית עמאל

The last clause (בברית עמאל) is, of course, a regular mannerism of Hadassī. See my comment above, 173, note 13.

¹³ The modern formula is as follows: ועור רצו והתנו שניהם במבחר לבם בברית הר סיני ובחקי ישראל. הר חרב לשמור את מועדי יוי המקדשים בראית הירח ובמציאת האביב בארץ ישראל. Cf. the text of that paragraph and the pertinent references, below, 343, note 117. The impression is gained, on comparing the Hadassī passage and the Byzantine-formulated *kethubboth* in the prayerbooks with the eastern, Palestinian and Egyptian, formulae, that the expression בברית הר סיני ובחקי חורב is of Byzantine origin. Thus, Hadassī possibly preserved here the genuine wording going back to the formative years of Karaism in the Empire.

The importance attached to the proper observance of the Karaite mode of calendation was well manifested also in the cases of mixed marriages between Rabbanite and Karaite. An unequivocal assurance safeguarding the right of the Karaite party to persevere in his or her calendar was specifically stipulated in the marriage contracts formulated for such occasions. Thus, the standard text of an interdenominational *kethubbah*, preserved in an eleventh-century Egyptian Karaite formulary and required of a Rabbanite marrying a Karaite lady, lists the following obligations of the bridegroom:

He shall not bring into his house, as long as she is his wife, the fat-tail, or the two kidneys, or the large lobe of liver, or the flesh of a pregnant animal, or the bread of Gentiles or their wines and their abominations.¹⁴ Further, he shall not light a candle on Sabbath eves and there shall be no fire in his house during the Sabbaths. He shall not sleep with her on Sabbaths and festivals the way he does on weekdays, and he shall not make her desecrate the [true] festivals of the Lord of Hosts as they fall in accord with lunar observation and the finding of *abib* in Palestine. For she belongs to the People of the Scripture [*Anshē Miḳrā'* =Karaites] and adheres to their religious principles.¹⁵

Indeed, an extant twelfth-century contract of an actual intermarriage in Fustāṭ, Egypt, not only pledges mutual respect for the religious convictions of either party, but, for reasons peculiar to that specific case, puts a particular stress on the preservation of the *Karaite* calendar:

And he [i.e., the Rabbanite bridegroom] took upon himself . . . not to desecrate in front of this [Karaite] wife of his the festivals of God, celebrated according to lunar observation . . . ; and this lady took upon herself versus this husband of hers not to desecrate in his presence the festivals of our brethren the Rabbanites, as long as she will remain with him . . . ; and they *both* bound themselves sincerely, willingly and forthrightly to follow the custom of the Karaites [*Benē Miḳrā'*] who observe the sanctified festivals according to lunar observation and to the finding of *abib* in the Land of Israel.¹⁶

¹⁴ Under "abominations" (טנוף) meals prepared by Gentiles are meant, no doubt. So, for instance, in Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ's Epistle, *Likkūṣē*, App. III, 32: ואיך אשקוט ומקצת ורע: הקדש . . . יוצאים אחרי קרוא המגילה אל שוק הגוים וקונים מהם כל מיני ממתקים הנעשים במשמנם ובמתמם ובמדתם הכל מגואל בכל טנוף.

¹⁵ Cf. the text (הדה שרוט ללמרה אלקראיה אלי אלרגל אלרבאן) as preserved in the formulary (הדה נסכה כתבה מצד לבני מקרא) published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 171 ff., esp. 173; also partly in Mann's *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 211 f.: וכי לא יביא אל ביתו בהיותה אשתו עליה ולא שתי הכליות ולא יותרת הכבוד ולא בשר נקבה נפל בה הריון ולא בהמה הרה ולא להם אמות העולם ולא יניחם [צ"ל: ייניהם] ולא טנופם. ולא יבעיר נר כלילת השבת ולא יהיה בביתו אש בימי השבתות ולא ישכב עמה בימי השבתות ובימי המועדים שכיבת ימי החול ולא יכריח אותה על חלול מועדי יי' צבאות אשר על ראית הירח ובהמצא אביב בארץ ישראל, כי היא מאנשי מקרא בהמה הרה ולא להם אמות העולם ולא יניחם [צ"ל: ייניהם] ולא טנופם. ולא יבעיר נר כלילת השבת ולא יהיה בביתו אש בימי השבתות ולא ישכב עמה בימי השבתות ובימי המועדים שכיבת ימי החול ולא יכריח אותה על חלול מועדי יי' צבאות אשר על ראית הירח ובהמצא אביב בארץ ישראל, כי היא מאנשי מקרא (For some of the other points stipulated here, such as those pertaining to Karaite dietary laws and to the problem of Sabbath candles, see the discussions above, 265 ff., 285 ff., and esp. 288, note 106.)

¹⁶ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 177 ff., esp. 179 f. (partly also in his *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 212): והתנה על נפשו . . . שלא יחלל על אשתו זאת את מועדי יי' על ראית הירח (and שלא ידליק עליה נר שבת ולא יאניסנה במאבלה ובמשקה . . . והתנתח רייסה זאת על נפשה לאישה זה שלא

Consideration for the Karaite mode of calendation was demanded even of the Rabbanite Nasī, David, the son of the Palestinian gaon Daniel ben 'Azaryah, who in 1082 married the daughter of a Karaite notable in Fustāṭ. In deference to the bridegroom's position, however, the document as a whole was drawn up in Aramaic, unlike the regular Karaite *kethubboth* (or the aforementioned Rabbanite *kethubboth* issued to Karaite ladies) which were always phrased in Hebrew. Even here, however, the special paragraph safeguarding the Karaite lady's freedom of sectarian observance was formulated in Hebrew.¹⁷ Naturally, similar stipulations were contained in *kethubboth* made out by Karaite bridegrooms to Rabbanite ladies, although certain conditions (such as that pertaining to the Karaite prohibition of marital relations on Sabbath eve) could be dispensed with.¹⁸

Unfortunately, no comparable texts from Byzantium have been found so far and published. In fact, we even have no actual indication as to the relative prevalence, or the very occurrence, of Karaite-Rabbanite intermarriage in the Empire. Whatever the case, Byzantine Karaites surely followed the example of their Palestinian masters in the field of

חלל עליו מועדי אחינו הרבנים כל ימי היותה עמו ושהיה נשמרת במאבלו ובמשקתו... והתנו שניהם על נפשם שיהיו בלב שלם ונפש חפצה דרך ישרה וינהגו על מנהג בני מקרא השומרים את המועדים המקודשים על ראייה הירה ומציאת האביב בארץ ישראל. Incidentally, the stipulated arrangement of eventual inheritance, in the case of the lady's death prior to her husband, was also in accord with the Karaite usage (*ibid.*, 179, lines 31–32; on that point in the Karaite law of inheritance see briefly above, 255 f.).

The reason for such special consideration of the bride's religion and finances is, of course, to be sought in her great wealth and high standing in society. The widowed daughter of an apparently important Karaite personality (הדורה המיוקרה רייסה האלמנה) she was now represented by a wealthy and highly respected member of the Karaite community (חוקן הנכבד ישועה) הכהן בן כב[ור] גל[ולת] קל[ושת] מל[נא] ורב[נא] השר האדיר והחסיד צדקה הכהן בן ישועה הכהן השר (הנכבד נחור עדן). In *regular* cases, the rights of *both* parties were ensured in equal measure.

¹⁷ Cf. the text in S. Schechter's "Genizah Specimens," *JQR* (O.S.), XIII (1899–1900), 218 ff., esp. 221 (Gulak, *Oṣar hash-Sheṭaroth*, 33 f., No. 29): עוד קביל על גפשיה שלא להבריא נאשיה אנתיה דא שחשב עמו בנר שבת ולא תאכל אליה ושלא תחלל מועדיה על מנת שחשמור עמו המועדים. See also above, 42, note 41, and, 288, note 106. For the Karaites' insistence on the exclusive use of Hebrew in all Jewish documents and for their criticism of the Rabbanite use of *leshōn la'az*, cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 13a, Alphabet 8.

¹⁸ Cf. the *kethubbah* appended by Assaf to his edition of Hai Gaon's *Sefer hash-Sheṭaroth*, in *Tarbiz*, I/3 (1930), Supplement, 57 ff. (App. II): ואקניא בקניין גמור בכלי וקניא מן מבורך בר יפת חנא שלא ישנה דה הרבנין בכל מועדיהם וצומיהם וכלל דתוהיהם ותתנהג עמו על הדת. Similarly, cf. the fragment published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 170 f., esp. 171, where, to please the Rabbanite bride, the Karaite bridegroom drew up a *kethubbath ha-rabbanim*: לפי שקבלתי על עצמי שלא אחלל עליה מועדי יי אשר הרבנים מחזיקים בהם.

On the problem in general, see the remarks of Assaf, *op. cit.*, 55 f., and Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 156 ff.

marital laws as carefully as they did in the other fields from which Byzantine documentation is available. Hence, the importance attached to the preservation of the Karaite calendar in the *whole* Karaite world is well illustrated by the above examples, albeit these examples stem from Palestine and Egypt alone.

"ABIB" AND THE SAADYAN CAMPAIGN

Since the two *equally important* factors determining the Karaite calendar—the search for *abib* in Palestine and lunar observation—are usually lumped together in the early texts, scholars have paid little attention to the fact that their history is not at all identical. It is, of course, beyond the scope of the present study to attempt a general account of how these two calendar determinants fared in the course of ages. However, some of the phases of their history are closely interwoven with the life story of Karaism in Byzantium; hence, they must occupy an integral place in our presentation of the formative years of the sect in the Empire.

The first of these determinants, the Karaite *abib* system, with which we shall be concerned more fully in the succeeding pages, made the constant existence of a Karaite "observation point" in Palestine and the uninterrupted flow of communication between it and the Diaspora a matter of practical necessity; indeed, it was a quasi-religious imperative. No wonder Karaite "Mourners of Zion," appealing for the resettlement of Palestine as prerequisite for full Redemption, would partly base their argument on calendar requirements. Thus, the late ninth-century Daniel al-Ḳūmisi reminded his coreligionists that the immediate return to Zion would enable the pious to perform the necessary on-the-spot observations in Palestinian fields with regard to the ripening of barley. The timely sighting of the *abib* would thus contribute to the correct dating of the first month (*lishmōr eth ḥodesh ha-abib be-'ittō*) and reduce an important source of sin that stands in the way of Divine reconciliation with Israel.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Mann's already-quoted "Tract by an Early Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR* (N.S.), XII (1921–22), 257 ff., esp. 285, טק: לעבוד את יי' . . . קבץ גלות . . . ולשמור את חרש אביב בעתו ולשמור מצותיו. ועל כן כתוב באור ונלוו אל יי': על כן עליכם לרשמו את חרש אביב בעתו ולשמור מצותיו. See also above, 22, 55 (note 74), 187 (note 70), and below, 310.

Cf. also the hitherto unpublished section of the Byzantine *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Deuteronomy (probably excerpted from Yefeth ben 'Alī or another Palestinian exegete), Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 82a: שיבוא מקצתם אל ארץ הקדושה . . . שנת (עד ה' אלהיך) (דב' ד' ל) . . . בימי הגלות בעבור האביב והמועדים (וחבת את ה' אלהיך ושמרת) משמרתו: 85b. There also, 85b: מראשית השנה (דב' י"א א). במו שנת ראביב (ארץ אשר יי' אלהיך דורש אותה. . . מראשית השנה (דב' י"א יב). בה' המידוע והוא תחלת השנה באביב.

For a very detailed exposition of the *practical* aspects evolving from the search of *abib* in Palestine, cf. Levi ben Yefeth's באביב, in his *Book of Precepts*, Leiden

No wonder, also, that it was on this point that the Karaites were locked in an all-out struggle with Saadyah Gaon, the implacable foe of any Palestino-centric ideology.²⁰ In explaining away the biblical mentions of *abib* as referring to the ripening of barley in Egypt, the gaon did, as it were, challenge the very *raison d'être* of Karaism's newly organized Palestinian counter-institutionalism, and met, quite naturally, with no less sharp and unequivocal rebuttal on the part of Karaite spokesmen.²¹ But his was not merely an anti-sectarian fight. Through the exegetical stand he had taken in the matter, Saadyah hoped to take the wind out of the sails of Palestino-centricism in general, whether it served the interests of Karaism or responded to purely Rabbinic conceptions.²²

MS Warner No. 22, beginning with fol. 22b, bottom. The reader has surely noticed that our quotations do not antedate the latter part of the ninth century, i.e., the time when the Palestino-centric drive in Karaism was in full swing. We do not possess the appropriate portions of 'Anan's *Sefer Mišwoth* which dealt with *abib* legislation (although Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 147, ascribed to 'Anan the peculiar etymology of the word *abib* which is cited in Hadassi's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*). But we are apprised of 'Anan's position by Kırkisānī, al-Bürūnī, and Maḳrīzī. See on it further in this discussion, 305 f. (and notes 33–34).

²⁰ See above, *Introd.*, 24.

²¹ For the Palestino-centric orientation of the Karaites in their *abib* system of calendation and for their refutation of Saadyah's arguments on this point, see the hitherto unpublished *Book of Precepts* of Levi ben Yefeth, Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 23b: וגם אשר אמר [=סעדיה] בי יחייב עליהם על עקדם שיעשו על אביב ארץ מצרים ולו חפץ אביב בארץ יש' חייב שיזכר אותה. וגם זה טעה כי מפני כי הקב"ה צונו שנקצור ארצנו ונביא קציר מארצנו והוא העומר אשר ירוב בנת המצוה ונחקים מה כי המעשה והצווי הוא על אביב ארץ כנען להגדיל הגבולות של ארץ ישראל ונחקים מה כי המעשה והצווי הוא על אביב ארץ כנען. Cf. in the above MS, 26a ff.

Also the eleventh-century Byzantine author of the already-quoted *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous* emphasizes the Palestino-centricism of the Karaite calendar, in obvious refutation of Saadyah's "Egyptian" argument. Cf. Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 46 a: ודע כי זה שאמר היום אתם יוצאים בחרש האביב לא הוא אביב של מצרים אלא הוא אביב של א"י. And further, on 46b: ודע כי אביב של מצרים יקדים לאביב ארץ ישראל חרש אחר... זה ישבר דברי פיומי: 46b. An echo of the same debate can still be heard in *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Deuteronomy, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 89a: והיא מארץ כנען: [ש' ט' לא] והיא מארץ כנען.

Of the printed material, the passage in Aaron ben Joseph's oft-quoted Commentary *Mibḥar* on Exodus, 19b, is usually invoked: וכאשר... וחרש הוא חרש אביב... והריע כי זה החרש הוא חרש אביב... ולא הוא באביב מצרים הצחי כי אביב מצרים ואביב ארץ כנען קרוב כחדש ימים ביניהם כי אביב מצרים קודם. והפיומי [=סעדיה] חשב כי טען לקראים בשמור את חרש האביב (רב' ט"ז א) באמרו בי אביב מצרים כבר הושחת ולא ירע כי בנפשו הוא. בי אין זה המאמר נזכר רק על אביב ארץ כנען. Cf. also Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadyah Gaon*, 77. See further the account of the anti-Saadyan debate in Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Kiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Ch. XXXVI, 33c-d.

(It is of interest to recall in this connection Benjamin of Tudela's account from Egypt [ed. Asher, I, 101; Eng. tr., 152]: [במצרים] השעורים ונביטן החטים: [ובאודר קוצרים].)

²² Thus, also the Rabbanite Mubashshir Halleḇī assailed Saadyah on the *abib* problem, refuting Saadyah's attribution of biblical *abib* references to Egyptian crop. Cf. the interesting *Kitāb Istidrāk*, edited by Zucker, 48 (Arabic text), 105 f. (Hebrew translation and apparatus).

For, indeed, when viewed in historical, *all-Jewish* perspective, the Palestino-centric orientation of the Karaites in their system of calendation appears to have been, in a sense, a *sui generis* revenge of the Land of Israel for the hegemony that had been wrested from it by the Rabbanite leadership seated in Babylonia. This struggle was partly sectarian, inasmuch as the Karaites, having made Palestino-centricism since the late ninth century the central theme of their propaganda, succeeded in turning Palestine into their base of operation and became increasingly identified in the mind of Diaspora Jewry with the cause of Zionism. Even the originally Rabbanite term *Abelē Şiyyōn*, i.e., "Mourners of Zion," became gradually tinged with sectarian connotations and was finally equated with Karaism.²³ But, in the last analysis, the Karaite championship of Palestine and of a Palestinian-oriented calendar formed but a sectarian extension of the age-long, basic struggle between the two great centers of Jewish spiritual and communal endeavor and the two divergent concepts of Jewry's road and goal in history.²⁴ *This struggle cut across both branches of Jewry* (although it is true that it divided the Karaites to a lesser degree only), *and confronted the respective territorial (i.e., Babylonian and Palestinian or Palestinian-led) segments of both Karaism and Rabbinism with an agonizing dilemma.*

REGIONAL CONTEST

The fact that the calendar problems of the time were merely reflecting the

Zucker's basic conception of Mubashshir's anti-Saadyan critique, at least as far as the points common to him and the Karaites are concerned, is, so it seems to me, unacceptable. The assertion that "only his zeal of criticism and of digging up contradictions made R. Mubashshir, the orthodox Rabbanite, attack Saadyah even on matters which constitute the fundamentals of Rabbanite-Karaite controversy" (Introd., 2), ignores the great conflicts *within* the Rabbanite society of the time. These conflicts cut across party lines and created unusual combinations of foes and friends. See the "Historical Premises" above, esp. 41 ff.

²³ The earliest *literary* usage of the term among Karaites has been traced to Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, in the second half of the ninth century. Cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 79, and note 44a; and above, 23.

For the passages in question see now al-Ḳūmisī's *Pithrōn Shenēm 'Asar*, 25 (*ad* Hos. 14:8), 59 (*ad* Zeph. 3:12; see below, 310, note 43), 69 (*ad* Zech. 7:1-9). See also the expression *והתאבלו אל ציון* (57, *ad* Zeph. 2:3), and *ולא מתאבלים על ציון* (61, *ad* Hag. 2:17; see below, 313, note 48), and *אבל ירושלם* (34, *ad* Am. 3:15; see below, 312, note 46).

Similarly, it is worth while to note here the conversions to Karaism of such Rabbanite visitors in Palestine as Ibn at-Tarās of Spain (*Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah, Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 79), or the two Rabbanite brothers from Toledo who adopted Karaism in the city of Ramlah after having been ransomed from Byzantine captivity; cf. Assaf, "Sources for Jewish History in Spain" (Hebrew), *Zion*, VI (1940-41), 33 ff. [= *Mekō-roth u-Meḥkarim*, I, 106 ff.]. Also see Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 47 ff., 60 f.

²⁴ See above, 13 f.

broader issues of the "Palestine-versus-Babylonia" contest had become a truism in twentieth-century expositions of medieval Jewish history. The famous calendar dispute in the tenth century between Saadyah Gaon, the Egyptian-born spokesman for Babylonia and for the diasporic view, and the Palestinian gaon Ben Meir, defending Palestinian prerogatives, formed the last great intra-Rabbanite battle of this kind in the geonic era.²⁵

Nevertheless, while regional differentiation and the ensuing contest between respective regional interests did not come as a surprise to students of Rabbanite Jewish society, no similar phenomenon is admitted up till now in the case of *Karaites*. With astonishing defiance of extant texts and of the general lesson of history, scholars hold on to a uniform conception of Karaism, the distances in time and place notwithstanding. At best, the time element would be taken into account: the life story of the sect would be divided horizontally, i.e., according to chronological *periods* in the sect's development all over the Jewish world. No vertical division, according to geographical *regions* and their peculiar characteristics and interests, has ever been attempted.²⁶ Similarly—this goes without saying—never were the evident regional Karaite differences explained in terms of *struggle* of the given regions for hegemony in the Karaite world. Nor was the possible parallelism between intra-Karaite and intra-Rabbanite feuds in the same period and region ever pointed

²⁵ On this conflict cf. especially Bornstein's comprehensive Hebrew essay, "The Controversy between Saadyah Gaon and Ben Meir," in the *Sokolow Jubilee Volume* (1904), 19 ff., and the texts assembled there. See also Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, I, 50 ff., where additional references are listed; H. Malter, *Life and Works of Saadia Gaon*, esp. Chapter IV, 69 ff.; and Cassuto, "What Did Saadyah Gaon and Ben Meir Differ About?" (Hebrew), in the Hebrew Anniversary Volume *Rab Saadyah Gaon*, edited by J. L. Fishman [Maimon], 333 ff. See also, most recently, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 30 f.

²⁶ Thus, for instance, even when coining geo-chronological terms for the sake of periodization of Karaite history—such as 'The Byzantine Period,' Lithuanian Epoch' (Harkavy, *Jewish Enc.*, VII, 443b and 444a), or 'The Byzantine-Turkish Period,' 'The Taurido-Lithuanian Period' (Poznański, *Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 667a and 669b)—scholars intended, through admixture of geographical characteristics, to point merely to the *successive geographic shifts* of centers of Karaite communal and literary activity in the course of history. They were unmindful of the *simultaneous regional differences* within the framework of one and the same period.

An important step in the right direction was implied in Mann's division of his great thesaurus of Karaite materials, *Texts and Studies*, II, into three geographically oriented sections: 'Karaism in the Near East,' 'Karaism in Byzantium, Turkey and the Crimea,' and 'Karaism in Lithuania and Poland.' Owing, however, to the special character of Mann's work, with its paramount emphasis on edition of texts rather than on a well-knit account of Karaite history on the basis of these texts, the above division, too, remained, in the last analysis, a technical framework only.

out. That such parallelism could reflect an actual *Karaite-Rabbanite community of cause* in Babylonia, say, in opposition to the common stand of both Karaites and Rabbanites in Palestine (or in satellite regions), would, indeed, seem merely the wildest guess.²⁷

And yet, the available indications to this effect are too striking to be ignored. In a future volume (to be devoted to the continuation of this story of "Karaites in Byzantium" from the First Crusade on), I intend to discuss what seems to have been a fateful struggle between the Byzantine and Egyptian branches of the sectarian movement for leadership of the Karaite world.²⁸ In the present connection, only the undeniable involvement of the Karaites of Palestine and Babylonia in taking opposing positions on matters of calendation will be placed in the broader historical context of the "Palestine-versus-Babylonia" controversy. For it is noteworthy and hardly accidental that in the Karaite camp, too, the first breach in the Palestino-centric mode of intercalation was indeed made by the *Babylonian* branch of the sect.

Jewry is divided on that point [i.e., on the method of declaring the advent of the crucial month of *Nisan*] into three differing groups [sums up Levi ben Yefeth, the early eleventh-century Palestinian Karaite jurist].²⁹ The first group, comprising the majority community, are the Rabbanites, the followers of the *mōlad* [=the precalculated birth of the New Moon], who are acting [in this matter] on the basis of computation. This is close to *al-i'tidāl* [=the equinox], i.e., the time when the sun enters the Constellation of the Ram [=Aries]. And they do not search for the *abib* [i.e., for ripened barley] in conjunction with the beginning of their calendar-year. Thus it may happen that at one time the barley will mature prior to their [vernal] New Year, while another time it will tarry and appear later.

The second group consists of people in the Land of Shine'ar [=Babylonia]³⁰ from

²⁷ This idea was expressed briefly, for the first time, in my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 28-30.

²⁸ I hoped, at first, that the chapter dealing with the mutual relations between the Byzantine and Egyptian Karaites could be included in the present volume. See my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 64. However, structural and technical considerations made it advisable to shift this discussion into the framework of the next volume. That volume is to deal with the impact of the Crusades and of the destruction of the sectarian center in Jerusalem on the consolidation and self-assertion of Byzantine Karaite leadership. Cf. also my brief comments in the Epilogue, below.

²⁹ Levi's book was written about 1006-7. See the date in *Likḳūṭē*, App. X, 90, and above, 227, note 44. Nevertheless, it described trends that set in much earlier. Our text here, as well as other sections of the book, show that Levi dealt with phenomena which were already a well-established reality in his own time.

³⁰ Paraphrasing Levi's presentation (see below, 304, note 32), the fifteenth-century Elijah Bashyachi interpreted the name *Shine'ar* as Russia or the Crimea (Khazaria). This interpretation, however, dictated by the concepts of Bashyachi's generation half a millennium after the actual events had taken place, is irrelevant in the present context. See below, 316, note 50.

among our brethren the Karaites. They follow the [computation of the vernal] equinox alone; yet, they stipulate certain conditions which are different from those stipulated by the Rabbanites. This is why we have listed this group as separated from the Rabbanites Now, this second group does not inquire, nor search, for the *abib* at all; [its members simply] wait and do [the proclamation of *Nisan*] when the sun reaches the Constellation of the Ram

The adherents of the third group [i.e., the Palestinian-oriented Karaites] observe [the New Year] on the strength of *abib* alone and they do not investigate [the position of] the sun at all.³¹

Further in the same context, Levi ben Yefeth dismisses the erstwhile fine distinction between *the Rabbanites of Babylonia*, “who proclaim intercalation through computation,” and *the Babylonian Karaites*, who actually do the same but “stipulate certain [special] conditions,” and states plainly:

And the Karaites living in the Land of Shine'ar and in other far-away provinces followed the Rabbanites in [computing] intercalation, for they have found that in most cases the Rabbanite-computed intercalation of leap-years was correct. (However, the people of Palestine dissented on that point.)³²

Now, we possess no exact dates for either the incipient stages or the culmination point of the above development reported by Levi ben

³¹ Cf. the excerpt from Levi's *Book of Precepts*, in Pinsker's *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. X, 87 ff., esp. 89. The passage was printed by Pinsker in an abridged form. In the quotation to be given presently, the full text will be reproduced on the basis of Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 19a-b (the additional words or sentences will be marked off by parentheses; negligible grammatical variants will not be collated): גפרו ישראל בזה על ג' חלקים. הא' (הראשון והוא עדה הגדולה הרבים) והם הרבנים בעלי המולד אשר יעשו על החשבון והוא קרוב מן אל אעתדאל והיא העת אשר חבוא השמש במול טלה ולא ידרשו האביב עם ראש השנה שלהם. (ועת אחר [אחרי?]) יהיה האביב קודם ראש שנתם ועת אחר יתאחר ויתעכב) והב' (והחלק השני) והם אנשים בארץ שנער מן אחינו הקראין יעשו על אל אעתדאל בלבד. ואולם יש להם תנאים זולת תנאי הרבנין ועל כן הפירדנו אותם מהם. והחלק הג' עשו על האביב בלבד ולא דרשו האעתדאל והשליכו אותו כל עקר. (והידוע מדברי החלק הראשון. ואשי שמענו מדבריהם והמסופר בעבורם כי הם זכרו מן סימני השנה ומן הפירות והזרעים. ואולם עשו על האביב ועל התקופה וזה ספור הראשונים). והזרות האחרונים מן הרבנים עשו על דרך החשבון (חשבון בידיהם. והוא קרוב אל אעתדאל והאביב ברוב השנים. והראשונים במקצת העתים היו יעברו שנים ויפשוטו אחרים כאשר יראו בעת שיקרה להם דברים... והחלק השני [=קראי שנער] לא שאלו ולא דרשו בעבור האביב כל עקר אבל הם יחכו ויעשו עת ביאת השמש במול טלה... והחלק הג' עשו על האביב ולא דרשו השמש כל עקר).

³² Cf. *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. X, 90 (the last clause, put in parentheses, is supplemented here from Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 22a): והקראין אשר בארץ שנער ובשאר המקומות: הרחקות דפו אחרי הרבנין בעבור כי מצאו המעוברות שלהם תמימות במרבית העתים (והחליפו אותם) ואשי ארץ ישראל. This is also the way Elijah Bashyachi understood Levi's passage when reporting its contents in *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Kiddūsh ha-Hodesh*, Ch. XXXIV, 31c: ואמר החכם ר' לוי בכ"ד יפת שקלות הקראים בארץ שנער היו מתנהגים תחלה בתחלת: השנה על פי התקופה ואחרי כן נמשכו גם הם בחשבון העבר עושים הרבנים

It is interesting to note that Bashyachi did not conceive Levi's report as a mere statement of fact but as pointing to an actual *feud* between the Palestino-centric *abib*-seekers and the Diaspora-minded party. Cf. *loc. cit.*: ויש להם [=לקראי שנער] טענות. Bashyachi proceeds then

Yefeth. Nevertheless, the available circumstantial evidence permits a fairly plausible reconstruction of the said Babylonian Karaite estrangement from the Palestinian orientation in calendar science.

Of course, such a reconstruction forms, strictly speaking, a chapter in the history of Babylonian and Palestinian, rather than Byzantine, Karaism. Since, however, the task has never yet been undertaken, it cannot be shirked in the present connection. For it is against the background of the Babylono-Palestinian relations within the Karaite camp, as mirrored in the *abib* problem, that the *different* pattern of attitude to Palestine, manifested by Byzantine Karaism, can be fully understood and appraised.

THE BABYLONIAN "ABIB" DEVIATION

In the first place, the chronological sequence of the process should be considered. The striving for exemption from the duty of checking on the state of crops in Palestine before determining the New Year in the Diaspora could not have arisen among Babylonian Karaites at a very early date. The *beginning* of the trend must be placed only after the early decades of the ninth century have passed. For it was not before the latter half of the eighth, and the first decades of the ninth century that the *abib* principle was actually formulated (or revived) by 'Anan and his successors in Babylonia and Persia, as a rallying cry of anti-Rabbanite dissent there.

Now, true to 'Anan's general Babylono-centricism, also his calendary doctrine was evidently formulated from the standpoint of a Diaspora Jew seeking the basis for full Jewish living *outside* Palestine. Indeed, Arab historians, who, in general, paraphrase *Karaite* literary and oral traditions, did preserve an information which was let to fall into oblivion by later Karaite literature itself. As I understand al-Bīrūnī and Maḳrīzī, 'Anan admitted also *the finding of ripened barley in Babylonia* as sufficient evidence for fixing the New Year.³³ Nevertheless, the Diaspora-minded

to summarize the debate on the basis of *Levi's Book of Precepts* (cf. an excerpt of that debate below, 321, note 52). Cf. also *Gan 'Eden*, 14d, and the discussion of Babylonian "doubts" (תקופה) there by Aaron ben Elijah, 17b f.

³³ Thus, both al-Bīrūnī (ed. Sachau, 59) and Maḳrīzī (in De Sacy, I, 92) state clearly that 'Anan كبس الشهور بان نظر كل سنة الى زرع الشعير بنواحي العراق والشام (by *ash-Shām*, of course, Palestine is meant). Mahler's recent objections, on the ground that "the Karaite writers—true, those of later generations—speak of Palestine alone," and that al-Bīrūnī "erroneously added Irāk [= Babylonia] of his own imagination," are, surely, well in line with Mahler's conception of 'Anan as a Palestino-centric nationalist, but have no documentary support. In fact, Mahler

heresiarch would not utterly forsake the geographic-Palestinian characteristic of *abīb* as a calendar determinant; he made the collecting of *preliminary* climatic and agricultural data from Palestine a legal prerequisite for the *ultimate* fixing of intercalation in Babylonia on the basis of native Babylonian crops.³⁴ This equivocal attitude surely paved the way for those radical ninth- and tenth-century Karaite Babylono-centricists who, while preserving *abīb* as such, would take "a certain place in Baghdād" as an acceptable basis for their *preliminary* observations as well; for "they assert [says Ẕirkisānī] that it was tested and was found to be the same as Palestine."³⁵ But, whatever the later repercussions, such complete independence from Palestine was hardly envisaged by the eighth- and early ninth-century Founding Fathers of Karaism in Babylonia.

Moreover, the corresponding situation within Babylonia's *Rabbanite* camp also could not fail to affect the calendary concepts and practice of the early Babylonian sectaries. The initial diasporic Karaite concession of a Palestinian preference in matters of calendation, notwithstanding 'Anan's inherent Galutho-centricism, must surely have gained strength from the parallel stand taken by contemporaneous Babylonian Rabbinism on the question of Rabbinism's own (precalculated) calendar in the Diaspora. As late as the mid-ninth century the Rabbanites of Babylonia did not insist on sovereignty in the field of calendation. Even while the forceful Babylono-centric campaign of Pirḳoi ben Baboi and his disciples for suppression of Palestinian-sponsored practices was in full swing,³⁶ no infringement was attempted on the traditional prerogatives of Palestine in shaping Jewish calendar policy. Indeed, no more than eighty-five years prior to the famous Saadyah-Ben Meir controversy, a Babylonian

himself is aware that only Karaites "of later generations" subscribed to Palestinian exclusivism. Cf. Mahler's *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 153, note 99.

³⁴ Such information had to be gathered well beforehand, so that the necessary decision be made in Babylonia on time. This is, probably, why 'Anan (according to the Arab historians as well as to the Babylonian Karaite Ẕirkisānī) placed the preliminary Palestinian inquiry in the closing week of *Shebāṭ* (i.e., the *eleventh* Karaite month) rather than in the customary *twelfth* month of *Adār*. In that manner, when, say, a negative response would arrive in Babylonia from Palestine some weeks later, the subsequent month would be proclaimed a *Second Shebāṭ*. The month thereafter (*Adār*) could, then, be confidently looked upon in *all* regions of Jewish Dispersion as the last month of the year, ushering at its close a new Karaite calendar-year commencing with *Nisan*. Cf., in addition to al-Birūnī and Maḳrīzī, *Kitāb al-Anwār* of Ẕirkisānī, I, 53 (Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII [1930], 384); IV, 843. See also Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, VIII, 124; Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, I, 47.

³⁵ Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 61 (*HUCA*, VII [1930], 393); IV, 838.

³⁶ See my brief comments above, 12 f., 21, 33 (note 15).

exilarch—a contemporary of the Karaite Benjamin an-Nahāwendī—did not hesitate to admit that in all calendar problems

we—[i.e., the Rabbanite authorities in Babylonia]—always rely on them [on the Palestinian *haberim* or *benē ḥabūrah*, i.e., accredited scholars], so that Jewry should not split into several sections. Hence, I, and the heads of the [Babylonian] Academies, and the [Babylonian] scholars and all Jewry rely on [instructions concerning] intercalation that are sent out on behalf of the [Palestinian] *haberim*.³⁷

In brief: Whether calendation be precalculated by Rabbinic authorities of the Holy Land, or based, as in the case of the Karaites, on annual observation in Palestine of agricultural phenomena, the respective efforts of both Rabbanites and Karaites of Babylonia to free themselves from the bonds of such Palestinian-determined calendar systems did not antedate the fourth or the fifth decade of the ninth century. They may, in fact, have started a decade or so later.

So much for the approximate *terminus a quo* of the situation described by Levi ben Yefeth. Conversely, the *culmination* of the above trend within the Karaite camp must have taken place long before Levi's writing his *Book of Precepts* in 1006–7 C.E. For, however prejudiced, the passages adduced above from the code of Levi ben Yefeth leave no doubt as to the fact that the Babylonian Karaite deviations in the field of calendation were already of extended existence. Even those sections of the code which still cling to the literary form of a *debate* between Babylonian and Palestinian Karaism cannot obviate the impression that here is merely a *post factum* dissection of the problem, devoid of any practical application,³⁸ as far as actual practice goes, it appeared the break had been final long since.

Obviously, then, local Karaite self-assertion in Babylonia versus the Palestinian-dominated *abib* method of intercalation reached its peak a considerable time prior to 1006–7. When Levi and his colleagues grudgingly conceded the rift, they simply lent Palestinian Karaism's belated recognition to a fact which for the Karaites of Babylonia had been an ever more widely known and accepted reality for some two or three generations. The conclusion, insofar as chronology is concerned, thus seems inevitable: *Babylonian Karaism began deviating from the Palestinian abib system and espousing Rabbinical computation of the*

³⁷ Cf. the letter written in 835 C.E., as published by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 41 f., esp. 42, lines 14–17: וּלְעוֹלָם עֲלֵיהֶן סִמְכִינָן וְלֹא לִיהוּי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲגוּדוֹת אֲגוּדוֹת: וְהָאֵם וְרֵאשֵׁי מְחִבְרַתָּהּ וְרֵבִבִין וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל [אֲסִמְכִינָן עַל עִבּוּרָא דְאִישְׁתּוּדֵי לְקַמֵּי חַבְרִין]. Cf. also Mann's comments there, I, 52 f., and, most recently, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 31. See also below, 350, note 137.

³⁸ A sample of such debate is contained in the quotation given below, 321, note 52.

New Year some time in the middle and the second half of the ninth century and made it a well-established practice during the early decades of the following century.

AGAINST PALESTINIAN SUPREMACY

Now, the time bracket in which we have witnessed the tendency of Babylonian Karaism to free itself from a practice embodying (in a Karaite way, of course) the traditional supremacy of Palestine over Babylonia in matters of calendation, cannot be accidental. The fact that this tendency falls exactly within the period beginning with the mid-ninth and climaxing in the early tenth century demands an explanation. It cannot be justified by merely pointing to the steady and undisputed decline of Karaism in the eastern regions. The Karaites of the East, however weak, successfully resisted over many ages to come the encroachments of Rabbinism in matters they deemed essential. They even persistently repudiated, we recall, such Rabbanite-tinged innovations and reforms—e.g., lighting Sabbath candles—as were found acceptable to their stronger coreligionists in fifteenth-century Byzantium and Turkey.

Nor, for that matter, can the undeniable difficulties resulting from geographical distances alone take the blame for the calendar deviation of Babylonia's Karaites. The same difficulties, after all, existed also generations earlier, when the Palestino-centric principle was proclaimed or restored in the first place, i.e., in the time of 'Anan and his immediate successors in Babylonia and Persia. The cry of distance would, of course, be raised by Babylonian Karaite spokesmen and reiterated time and again whenever reasons were advanced against the continuation of the *abib* system in the Diaspora. Indeed, an echo of that argument reverberates as late as the beginning of the eleventh century in the *Book of Precepts* of Levi ben Yefeth. But the argument was vigorously combatted by exponents of Palestino-centricism; the latter were quick to show that it was a secondary issue only, which had to be viewed against the broader background of the Palestine-Diaspora relationship.³⁹

It seems, then, that the key to the understanding of the particular development in the relations between Babylonian Karaism and Palestine, as it was reported by Levi ben Yefeth, does not lie in this or that argument

³⁹ Cf. the excerpt from the Leiden MS of Levi's *Book of Precepts*, as quoted below, 321, note 52. For 'Anan's solution of the difficulty accruing from the distance of Babylonia from Palestine, see my interpretation above, 306, note 34.

advanced by the parties. Rather, it may perhaps be sought in the very chronology of that development. For, significantly enough, the span of time in which we have placed the growth and maturation of the Babylonian Karaite estrangement from Palestinian-oriented calendation brings to mind two other important processes whose growth and climax also belong in the self-same chronological framework.

One is the intensification of the intra-*Rabbanite* struggle between Palestine and Babylonia over hegemony in the Jewish world. This struggle, too, as we have seen, invaded the field of calendation not before the mid-ninth century. Similarly, it also culminated in the early 20's of the tenth century. It was then, we remember, that the well-known calendar controversy came into the open, involving Saadyah Gaon, in defense of the Babylonian view, and Aaron ben Meir, championing the Palestinian cause.

The other is an intra-*Karaite* process. It concerns the practical implications of the Palestinian Karaite centralistic ideology as manifested in the movement for emigration and settlement in the Holy Land. This movement, too, belongs exactly to the period in which the depicted turn in Palestino-Babylonian relations within the Karaite camp was effected.

Now, the Saadyah-Ben Meir dispute was already alluded to several times in the course of this study. Its details and broader communal significance have been abundantly discussed by scholars and need not be gone into again. On the other hand, the parallel growth of the sectarian center in Palestine merits more than a passing comment in this connection. Indeed, it was, we remember, during those seventy years covered by the present inquiry (from the middle of the ninth century on) that a strong, nationalistically minded Karaite community had arisen in Jerusalem under the spiritual guidance of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī and his disciples. And it was Daniel al-Ḳūmisī who, a century before Levi ben Yefeth, first accused "some [Babylonian] Karaites" of having forsaken the *abib* altogether.⁴⁰

CONDEMNATION OF THE "EXILIC WAY OF LIFE"

Itself composed of immigrants from Babylonia and the eastern provinces, the leadership of the new Jerusalem center opened a powerful campaign against those who chose to stay behind, deliberately identifying true Judaism (i.e., Karaism) with Palestine and condemning any and all form of diasporic life and worship. There were, of course, in the Diaspora

⁴⁰ See the text above, 220, note 29: וגם בבבלי מקרא שאינם שומרים אביב:

some numerically negligible exceptions, pietists who showed unusual immunity to the destructive effects of exilic living. In general, however [so ran the argument], diasporic worship was *inherently* doomed to degenerate into a “commandment of men which is learned by rote” (Isa. 29:13). This in the Karaite legal jargon was, we remember, another way of saying that worship in the Diaspora was bound to “turn Rabbinic.”

All the generations of Dispersion [dōroth galūth] to this very day are called “children of harlotry” [such is Daniel’s unqualified verdict on the basis of Hosea 2:6]. For they all are trained in evil, [being] disciples of the Teachers [ham-melammedim] who mislead Israel through the commandment of men which is learned by rote.

Indeed [says Daniel],

the people of Dispersion [*anshē galūth*] did add foolishness [to the misconduct of their Judaeen ancestors] in that they learned from the [Rabbanite] sinners to sin and to despise just pronouncements and to insult the righteous. [Only here and there], just one out of the many may possibly learn from the pious the way of piety. [Alas], this is why our Exile has lasted so long!⁴¹

As against the hopelessness of the diasporic position, settlement in Palestine was capable of offering an all-out solution to the practical problems of correct religious observance, Daniel argued.⁴² In addition, it vouchsafed survival until the time when the Hour of Redemption would strike: Unlike the proud and mighty [of the Diaspora] who would not shrink even from identifying “Zion” with “Babylonia,” the humble handful of pre-messianic pioneers of the *Abelē Şiyyōn* group in Jerusalem will surely live to see the Divine Promise come true.⁴³ Indeed, they will

⁴¹ Of the many passages which could be cited to this effect from the extant works of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, a few examples only can be given in this connection. They will be cited here from his newly edited *Pithrōn Shenēm ‘Asar*.

Cf., for instance, 2 f. (*ad* Hos. 2:6): *בי דורות הגלות בלם עד היום הזה נקראו ילדי (Characteristically, al-Ḳūmisī uses here the term “Teachers” which was the preferred title of Karaite scholars. Cf. above, 185, note 64, and my “The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses,” 21. See also below, 313, and note 48.)*

Cf. further, *Pithrōn*, 7 (*ad* Hos. 4:15): *ואנשי גלות הוסיפו אולת ללמד מן החוטאים עון: ולהתעב דברי צדק ולהרף צדיקים ואולי אחד מרבים ילמדו דרך חסר מחסידים ועל כן ארכה גלותנו וחלק לבם, מעבודת ה' לעבודת שוא וגם בגלותם למצות אנשי[ם] מל[מד]ה[ם]. ואם יאמרו גלותיים כי הדברים האלה: דבר לראשונים העובדים אלהים אחרים ויוצחו בקר וצאן לאילילים ועל כן השיב להם על ידי נביאיו ... כן מזכחות בגלות גרנא אלקצאין, ... לחסוא לי לאכול על הדם הרבו למאות בגלות לרוב.*

On the derogatory expression מלמד מלמדא, see above, 284, note 94. See also Wieder, *JJS*, IV (1955), 24 f.

⁴² See, for instance, above, 299, note 19, regarding the question of *abib*.

⁴³ Cf. al-Ḳūmisī *ad* Zech. 2:11 (*Pithrōn*, 63): *הוי ציון המלטי. אמר על בני ציון שהם יושבים: בגלות בבליה. והשונים אמרו כי קרא לבבל ציון. ולא כן הוא כי הוא ציון היושב בבליה. והשארתי בקרבך עם עני ודל חסו בשם ה'. הם: ענינים אבלי ציון. ואוי לכל באים ביום ההוא כי לא יהיו מן שארית ישראל.*

enjoy the right of precedence in the order of Redemption. For those who settled in the Holy City prior to the general exodus "into the wilderness of the peoples" (Ez. 20:34–35) shall be saved first.⁴⁴

It will come as no surprise that in the standard list of transgressions, characterized thus by the Palestino-centricists as intrinsically connected with the pattern of exilic living, the deviation from the Palestinian-determined calendar repeatedly occupied a position of prominence. Significantly, however, Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, active more than a century before Levi ben Yefeth, fails to specifically accuse the Babylonian Karaites, *qua* Karaites, of following the Rabbanite calendar, the way Levi does. Rather, in the calendar question also he remains faithful to his black-and-white diagram of Jewish living. He outlines two major ways of life: the "exilic," which, even though it may include Karaites, is inevitably Rabbanite-inspired, and the "true" way, which is that of the Karaites of Palestine. Employing the deliberately vague term *anshē galūth*, People of Dispersion, al-Ḳūmisī consciously lumps together *all* brands of diasporic Jewry, making the Karaites, half-Karaites, etc., line up along with the *rank and file* of the Rabbanite population. They *all* are taken to task for deciding that "it is better for us to follow the *rabbanim* [by which the *official Rabbanite leadership* is meant] and [to celebrate] the festivals as determined by calculation."

"Call his name *Lo-ammī* [=Not My People]" (Hos. 1:9)—this prophecy [decides al-Ḳūmisī] refers to the period after the Israelite and Judaeon exile unto this very day, all through the years of Galuth, for the People of Dispersion [*anshē galūth*] have forsaken God's Torah and have gone astray after the commandment of men which is learned by rote and after *false festivals*.

Paraphrasing finally the famous words of Malachi, the Palestino-centric leader raises the calendar difference to the rank of a symbol of the nation's tragic split:

"Have we not all one father?" (Mal. 2:10)—and he is Jacob. "Hath not one God created us?" (*ibid.*)—and He is our Lord Jehovah. "Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" (*ibid.*)—*changing [the dates of] God's festivals* and His commandments, so that there is a divergence between a man and his brother?⁴⁵

In other words: Rather than view Jewish society the world over as

⁴⁴ Cf. Daniel's comment on Habbakuk 3:3, *Pithrōn*, 54: זה הוא מדעתי כי אשר באו מן: זה המדבר הם נקבצים מן הגויים, כל[חוב] וקבצתי אתכם מן הארצות [יחז' כ' לד], ויהיו חנה [=בא"י] קצת ישראל אשר לא במדבר והם יושע[ו] בתחלה מן יתר ישראל, וכל[חוב] והושע ה' את אהלי יהודה בראשונה [זברי' י"ב ז]. Further in the same chapter (*ad* Hab. 3:15), *Pithrōn*, 56, Daniel repeats the idea again: וכמדת מעוט דעתי אולי יהיו אהלי יהודה הנושעים בראשונה בירושלים ונגו יבוא עליהם. This was, in fact, implied already earlier, when commenting on Joel 3:4, *Pithrōn*, 30: כל אלה כח[חוב] על יום גוג אחרי שבת קצת ישראל על אדמת ישראל.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Pithrōn Shenēm 'Asar*, esp. on the Book of Hosea. See, e.g., 1 (*ad* Hos. 1:9):

split on the question of calendation (and of other observances) according to an all-embracing religious allegiance, sectarian or orthodox as the case may be, al-Ḳūmīsī sees it breaking up into two camps along a central Historico-Geographical Divide—Palestine versus the Diaspora.

This uniquely sharp and radicalist presentation by the al-Ḳūmīsī school of religious and ritual divergences as a basically *regional issue* was blended with an equally extremist and indiscriminate generalization *along social lines*.

Woe to you, o Rich Men of Dispersion and the Wealthy of Israel in Babylonia, you who plant gardens and orchards [in the Diaspora] and establish summer-houses for yourselves . . . , and forget God's Torah and the Mourning of Jerusalem. Your money shall be an abomination at the End of Days and the retribution for [your] sins will descend upon you.⁴⁶

For just as living in the Diaspora tends *immanently* toward Rabbanite-inspired ways and practices, so it is also *immanently* centered on business and commercial pursuit and makes the amassing of riches man's paramount preoccupation. No wonder, then, that the "Rich of the Diaspora" assist the Evil [Rabbanite] Shepherds in "deprecating the glory of the [Divine] Commandments and in permitting that which is forbidden."⁴⁷

קרא שמו לא עמי. הוא נבואה לאחרי גלות ישראל ויחודה ער היום הזה כל ימי גלות למען כי עזבו אנשי קרא שמו לא עמי. הוא נבואה לאחרי גלות ישראל ויחודה ער היום הזה כל ימי גלות למען כי עזבו אנשי

היהים בגלות לא נוסרו מן הרבר הזה ויקבאו אל עוזבי מוערי (for the last word see Urbach's correction there, note 13). And further, 3 (*ad* Hos. 2:7): טוב לנו ללבב אחרי רבאים ומוערים בחשבונות See further, 8 (*ad* Hos. 5:8): רבאים ולא נוסרו ולא קנאם על עוזבי מוערי ה' ומשפט התורה ואף כי היום הזה בגלותנו כי עושים ישראל מלאכה ה' דמה ויהפכו תורת ה' (6:8) ואנשי גלות נשענים על כל הגוים. . . . And on p. 11 (*ad* Hos. 7:11-13): רמוע ריו ומצותי ושריהם הפוכי רברי אלהים חיים ומוערי ומצותי. . . . והאחרונים בגלות הפכו מצותי זאת נבואת הרשע על עם: לדברי טוב בחלוף ובמוערי שקר And p. 20 (*ad*-Hos. 12:2): הם בגלותם עושים מצות אנשים] מל' [מרה] אשר מועריהם חקתיים ברח עובר: Similarly, *Pithrōn*, in the section devoted to Haggai, 61 (*ad* Hag. 2:14): ואף כי היום כי לא: ישמרו שבה כד ולא מוערי אמת. And, finally, *Pithrōn*, 78, when commenting on Mal. 2:10: הלא אב אחר לבלגו. יעקב. הלא אל אחד בראגו. ה' אלהינו. מרוע נבגר איש באחיו. להחליף: מוערי ה' ומצותיו לגפול חלוף בין איש ובין אחיו.

בחי השן. . . . ואף כי אי לכם: 34 (*ad* Am. 3:15) See *Pithrōn* on the Book of Amos, 34 (*ad* Am. 3:15): יא עשירי גלות ועשירי ישראל בבבל נוטעי גנות ופרסים ומכניגים בחי הקיץ. . . . וחשכו תורתה [צ"ל: תורת ה'] ואבל ירושלם. כספכם נגדה יהיה באחרית ונקמת עונות עליכם וישכת ישראל. וישכחו בגלות: 14 (*ad* Hos. 8:14) in the Hosea Section, 14 (*ad* Hos. 8:14): את ה' אשר יצדם ויבלכלם וישמרום ולא זכרו שממות ויבנו חצרות והיכלות וגנות ופרס' [ים] וכל זאת עשו לשמחה נפשם בגלות ועל כן כח[וב] אחרי אל תשמח ישראל אל גיל (הושע ט' א)

סחרי גלות הבוט[תים] בעשרם: 21 (*ad* Hos. 12:9) Cf. *Pithrōn Shenēm 'Asar*, 21 (*ad* Hos. 12:9): ובספורותיהם אמרו הלא טוב לנו כי ניגע לעשות עושר למען נגנע רעב וכל צרה מעצמינו ביגיע ידנו ובנכסינו ער לא ימצאנו פחד צרה. . . . וגם יאמרו אנשי גלות כי עלינו לעשות סחורה כל[חוב] יגיע כפיך כי תאכל (תהל' קכ"ח ב). ולא ידעו כי פתרון יגיע כפיך הוא עשות מצות ה' ועל כן אמר אשריך וטוב לך (שם)

על הרעים חרה אפי. הם רועי גלות. העתורים. הם: 3 (*ad* Zech. 10:3) Further, *ibid.*, 72 (*ad* Zech. 10:3):

Thus, Jewish worship in Dispersion, through the very nature of exilic living, turns into "worship of wood and stone, of silver and of gold." Ruefully Daniel takes stock of the situation in the Jewry of his time, a situation resulting from the diasporic orientation of *all* segments of that Jewry.

Alas, as for our present position in our Galuth—God has hidden His face from us; His name is desecrated among nations; we have neither a prophet nor a priest nor a true Teacher; the Temple of God is desolated and profaned by all kind of uncleanness.

[At that very time], *all Jews* are trailing after their merchandise, bent on piling up silver and gold by way of lies and robbery, of wickedness and deceit; [they partake of] wine and intoxicating drinks and of all [sorts of] abomination. Indeed, neither do sighs fill their hearts at the [protracted] Exile nor do they mourn for Zion or worry at God's wrath against us and against the whole earth, even as it is written (Isa. 53:6), "All we like sheep did go astray." Thus we all resemble he who is unclean. . . , truly, we all are defiled.⁴⁸

There is a solution, however [thinks al-Ḳūmisī], one solution alone: Exodus from the Diaspora to the Holy Land, adoption of the pietistic practices anchored in Palestinian conditions, and complete disavowal of the diasporic way of life.

DIASPORIC DICHOTOMY

The revolutionary enthusiasm of al-Ḳūmisī's Palestino-centricism communicated itself, so it seems, to modern students of Karaism as well. The Palestinian orientation and the actual settlement of al-Ḳūmisī and his colleagues in Jerusalem were accorded a warm reception by Karaite researchers. This favorable attitude, let it be added, was no mere reflection of present-day predilections; it was definitely justified on objective grounds, too.

Al-Ḳūmisī personally, his ideology, and the general activity of his school truly are a most original and creative phenomenon in Karaite history; they are a fascinating subject-matter to study. Moreover, the

Urbach emended עשירי גלות עוזרי הרועים עד שיקלו כבוד המצות עליהם ויתירו את האסור וגם בגלותם כרוב עשרם והונם הרבו קנות בשר מן מזבחות טבחים: (ad Hos. 10:1); earlier, 16 (ad Hos. 10:1): ועבודה נכריה ללא אלהי אמת.

⁴⁸ *Pithrōn*, 63 (ad Zech. 2:1-4): וגם עבודת ישראל בגלות כעבודת עץ ואבן כסף וזהב. And earlier, in the Hosea Section, 13 (ad Hos. 8:12): עבודת עדת ישראל בגלות בעץ ואבן; or p. 23 (ad Hos. 13:2): להודיעך כי מעשה גלות כעבודת אלהים אחרים:

For Daniel's gloomy summary of the Jewish position, cf. *Pithrōn*, 61 (ad Hag. 2:17): ואף כי היום הזה בגלותינו כי הסתיר ה' פניו ממנו ושמי מחולל בגוים ואין לנו לא נביא ולא כהן ולא מלמד אמת ומקדש ה' שומם ונטמא בכל טמאה וכל ישראל תועים בסחורותיהם לצבור כסף וזהב בשקר וגזל וארץ ומרמה ויין ושכר וכל תרעבות ולא אנהת גלות בלבכם ולא מתאבלים על ציון ולא דואנים כי קצף ה' עלינו ועל כל הארץ בכל [תובן] כלנו כצאן תעינו (ישעי' ג"ב ו). ונהי כטמא כלנו. . . וכלנו טמאים

Palestino-centric doctrine, *especially in the modified, mature formulation of the late tenth and the eleventh centuries* (of which more later), had successfully stood the test of history and proved to be the turning-point in the life story of Karaism. As the subsequent developments have shown, the future of Karaism did lie in Palestine or, at least, in countries within the radius of Palestinian leadership and inspiration. It was Palestine, not Babylonia, which answered the call for a re-evaluation of the 'Ananite way and for renewed sectarian creativity. Similarly, Palestine alone succeeded in effecting the consolidation of the movement and saved it from the suicidal process of disintegration into innumerable splinter groups, a process which, we remember, set in during the ninth century.

In that general climate of praise and appreciation, little room was left for an analysis of the other side of the picture. For, while *in historical retrospect* Palestino-centricism seems a most positive contribution to Karaism, it undoubtedly proved a painful experience to large segments of Karaite population *contemporary with the incipient, uncompromising stages of that trend*. Truly, it was a trend charged with strife and presaging struggle; a consuming fire it was rather than a radiating light. Practically all Karaites, it should be remembered, lived *outside* of Palestine then. Even more important, the socio-religious and communal boundaries between Rabbanites and Karaites in one and the same locality were still fluid and largely undefined. When the overall balance of the *contemporaneous* Karaite public opinion in Babylonia is taken, the *inescapably adverse impact of Palestino-centricism* (in its extremist al-Ḳūmisī version, that is) on wide circles of Karaite believers who would not, or could not, subscribe to its radicalist requirements, must by no means be lost sight of.

The truth of the matter is that, as preached by al-Ḳūmisī, the total and unreconciled repudiation of diasporic Judaism, including also Judaism of the Karaite brand, could not have passed wholly unresented, least of all in Babylonia. While appealing to some, especially to the pietistic élite, because of the new meaning it lent to the spiritual and communal objectives of Karaism in the Jewish world, it surely appeared to the majority a slogan fraught with danger. In fact, it was tantamount to a verdict of virtual abandonment of the Karaite Diaspora to its own fate.

This dichotomy of attitude was not merely academic; it manifested itself in the practical field as well. Al-Ḳūmisī's pessimistic prognosis of Karaite future in the Diaspora and his uncompromising, Palestinian-exclusivist assertion that model Karaite living was conceivable only in Jerusalem were a two-edged sword. On the one hand, they hastened the exodus from Babylonia and Persia of convinced idealists; reminiscing of

such exodus became, indeed, a popular trait of the Palestinian-inspired romantic presentations of Karaite history from the mid-tenth century on.⁴⁹ Conversely, however, they could not fail to accelerate even more the existing gravitation of the contemporary majority of Babylonian Karaites—and of the still greater masses of the undecided—toward a Rabbanite-patterned, if not actually Rabbinical, optimistic way of life. Insofar as the broad segments of urban Jewish population in ninth- and early tenth-century Babylonia were concerned, Palestinian asceticism was a poor match for the high standard of living and the intellectual satiety which Karaites and Rabbanites alike enjoyed in the great central bases of the semi-capitalistic 'Abbāsīd civilization. Even those Babylonians who were ready to concede on principle the hegemony of the Palestinian center, and looked up to the "Mourners of Zion" as the ideal of piety and righteous living, would not necessarily feel obligated to draw personal conclusions requiring their own emigration and the severance of all ties with the Diaspora. Modern analogies are all too obvious to be summoned here in evidence.

Now, it goes without saying that al-Ḳūmīsī's uncompromising views were hardly the primary cause for the gravitation of Babylonian Karaism toward a modicum of all-Babylonian uniformity. Rather, the harshness accompanying his exposition of Palestino-centricism was partly determined by that process of gravitation as it unfolded with ever-growing intensity before al-Ḳūmīsī's own eyes prior to his emigration to Palestine. But once defined in such unequivocal terms, this radicalist doctrine helped foster a Babylonian Karaite sense of self-assertion by evoking unmistakable signs of a regional-minded philosophy in response to the Palestino-centric challenge.

ALL-BABYLONIAN COMMUNITY OF CAUSE

We are now in a position to sum up our inquiry into the background of the calendar rift between the Karaite faction of Babylonia and that of Palestine, as reported by Levi ben Yefeth. In the light of the foregoing discussion, one cannot help suspecting that the Babylonian Karaite discontinuance of the Palestino-centric system of *abīb* had a much deeper meaning than that apparent from the legal text. Its characteristic simultaneity with Babylonian Rabbinism's intensified involvement in a grave

⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., the tenth-century Palestinian, and twelfth-century Palestinian-inspired Byzantine texts adduced above, 45 f., note 53. Cf. further, 54, and note 72, as well as earlier in the Introduction, 22.

attack on the calendar of Palestine, as well as with the outburst of Palestinian Karaite exclusivism which questioned the justification of the sect's very existence in Dispersion, is highly suggestive. It points to the possibility that *the reported break with Palestinian-oriented calendation was the Babylonian Karaites' expression of the same sectional ambitions, interests and Babylono-centric tendencies which were at work among their Rabbanite counterparts in Babylonia*. The inconsiderate, undiplomatic, ultimatum-like challenge of Palestine, both Karaite and Rabbanite, to diasporic self-determination made that expression even more poignant and turned the latent ties of local interests and attachment into strong bonds of regional solidarity. Without the Babylonian Karaites and Rabbanites admitting it in so many words, these bonds proved stronger than the allegiance to sectarian or normative Halakhah.

This basic quality of a "Palestine-vs.-Diaspora" contest which we have attributed to the Babylono-Palestinian Karaite calendar divergency remains valid even though the Babylonian Karaite opposition to Palestinian exclusivism was not wholly unanimous at first. A somewhat similar phenomenon has been noted by tenth-century observers with regard to the contemporaneous intra-Rabbanite calendar feud as well. There, too,

some people from among the residents of Palestine followed the Babylonians; likewise, some of the residents of the Land of Shine'ar [=Babylonia] followed the Palestinians.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, neither the above situation within the *Rabbanite* camp, nor the breaking up of the Babylonian *Karaite* opinion into two uneven

⁵⁰ Cf. Sahl ben Mašliaḥ, in Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 36: לפני מזה בימי הפיתומי [=סעדיה] אשר פתה אנשים ונחלקו במועדיהם ויעשו אנשי ארץ ישראל יום והבבליים וההולכים אחריהם עשאוהו יום אחר. . . . ויש אנשים משוכני ארץ ישראל שלכו אחרי הבבליים וגם השוכנים בארץ שנער הלכו אחרי אנשי ארץ ישראל. Characteristically, Sahl speaks here in general of "Palestinians" and "Babylonians." He also uses the expression "Land of Shine'ar" for Rabbanite Babylonia much the same as Levi ben Yefeth does with regard to Karaite Babylonia. In the list of Palestinian Karaite literary mannerisms, *Shine'ar* assumed an *a priori* pejorative connotation as the seat of the "two wicked women" [=the two geonic academies] mentioned by Zechariah (5:9–11). This prophecy was a favorite tune of Palestinian Karaite polemicists. Cf., e.g., Salman ben Yerūḥam, as quoted by Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. II, 14; Sahl ben Mašliaḥ, in the above-quoted Epistle, *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 31, 43; Moses Dar'ī, in the excerpt published by Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 116.

Incidentally, it is quite clear from the above report of Sahl whither goes his sympathy in the intra-Rabbanite feud. While no love was lost between him and the Palestinian Rabbanites either, Sahl unreservedly accused Babylonia, and especially that *bête noire* Saadyah, for "enticing people so that they diverged on the [dates of] festivals" (perpetrating thus a pun on *pithōmi* [=Karaite nickname for Saadyah] and *pittah* [meaning 'enticed']).

factions detracts from the *general* character of these feuds as manifestations of the struggle between Babylonia and Palestine.

Moreover, before long, Babylonian Karaite unanimity in calendation was actually achieved. With the eventual removal of the Babylonian pietists to Palestine, the road was open for an all-Babylonian calendar procedure. What in al-Ḳūmisī's time was but the custom of the few, became a century later the practice of all. Reporting on this development in the early eleventh century, Levi ben Yefeth could not help admitting the truth that the break was final and general. After a futile attempt, we remember, to discover hair-splitting distinctions in the calendar practices of his Babylonian coreligionists, he finally made the sweeping observation that *all* Karaites of Babylonia and of the adjacent eastern provinces unanimously rejected the Palestino-centric *abīb*. Thus, the process which began some time in the middle of the ninth, and clearly gathered momentum in the early tenth century, became thereafter an undisputable element in Karaite geography. Karaite Babylonia as a whole belonged now to the orbit of the precalculated Rabbinical calendar.⁵¹

BYZANTIUM AND BABYLONIA

The Palestino-centric principle of Karaite calendation fared differently in Byzantium than it did in Babylonia. Unlike the Babylonian Karaites, the sectaries of the Empire unswervingly bowed to the guidance of the

⁵¹ It goes without saying that such divergence in the *method* of calendation resulted sometimes in an actual discrepancy of *dates*, since the precalculated Rabbanite calendar, followed by the Karaites of Babylonia, did not necessarily correspond to the *abīb* situation in Palestine which served in the tenth and eleventh centuries as the calendary criterion for the majority of the Karaites the world over (Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Byzantium, etc.). An example of such discrepancy has, indeed, been preserved in the Arabic preamble to an Egyptian Karaite *kethubbah* of the year 1032 C.E. The text was published by Assaf in his "Remnants from the Genizah" (Hebrew), *Sefer Klausner*, 229.

The document, possibly our oldest testimony of an actual *intra-Karaite* divergence of dates, has been drawn up in the month "which to the majority of the Karaites was *Ab*, while some Karaites considered it to be *Elūl*." Obviously, there was a delay in the ripening of barley in Palestine; hence, the Palestino-centric majority intercalated the year. "Some Karaites," however, evidently following the precalculated calendar, did not consider that year a leap-year. Consequently, their calendar was advanced by a whole month in relation to the calendar of the Karaite majority.

There can be no doubt that by "some Karaites" the Babylono-Persian sectaries are meant. Hence, Assaf's comments there (227, note 7) are hardly helpful. All his examples are taken from *later* centuries, when the Byzantine Karaites, too, could no longer adhere to the *abīb* system. However, this was not the situation in 1032. Similarly, one must beware of simplifications, such as the statement that "from the day on which the Karaites seceded from the Rabbanite Synagogue and began to

Jerusalem center in all calendar matters. They adhered, on principle, to the *abib* method of intercalation; they sought, further, Palestinian advice and legal decision whenever uncontrollable external difficulties made such adherence impractical.

Truly, Palestino-centric ideology was as valid on the banks of the Bosphorus as it was in the Hills of Judaea. Not only did the Byzantine Karaites keep in close touch with Palestine in all *practical* matters connected with the calendar, but they eagerly espoused the cause of Palestino-centricism in its *theoretical* formulation as well. Thus, on the one hand, Byzantine students, educated in Palestine, never doubted that the saintly behavior of their Palestinian masters was the uncontested model of proper Karaite living. On the other hand, it was not only the legally correct observance of precepts but the students' very sojourn in Palestine, their personal connection with the Palestinian soil and their "mourning" the desolation of Zion that gave now a new dimension to the Karaite ideal. Considering, then, this personal attachment, it seems only natural that, when the time would come for these students to assume leadership of the Byzantine Karaite community, the customs and legal procedures (including those in the calendar field) which they had observed in Palestine would be called upon to serve as exclusive criteria for diasporic living as well.

It goes without saying that the Byzantine students of the Jerusalem Karaite academy were hardly the sole factor responsible for this outstanding devotion of the Empire's Karaism to the Palestino-centric concept. The students obviously proved an effective *instrument* in the propagation of that concept and in the diffusion of Palestinian literature. The greater the number of such students through many generations, the stronger must have become the grip of Palestino-centricism on the mind and practice of the Karaites in Byzantium. Nevertheless, rather than being the power propelling a Palestinian-oriented trend, the growing number of these students and the practice itself of sending them to Jerusalem were the result and manifestation of that trend. (We do not hear, for instance, of any Karaite students being sent from Babylonia to Jerusalem and returning home to lead their communities in a pro-Palestinian spirit. It hardly can be argued that communication between Palestine and

intercalate the years according to *abib* . . . there was no end to strife among them while it was only once that a feud in these matters broke out among the Rabbanites; it was the famous Saadyah-Ben Meir controversy" (227). Rather, one must take an integrated view of the matter as a *simultaneous* process in both the Rabbanite and the Karaite camps, along the lines suggested in the present chapter.

Byzantium was easier than communication between Palestine and Babylonia; in many respects and in certain periods the contrary rather was true.)

It is obvious, then, that the difference between the attitude of Byzantine Karaism and the attitude of the Karaites of Babylonia to Palestine and to the Palestino-centric calendar cannot be attributed solely to successful indoctrination of Byzantine students in Jerusalem. It must have been the function of much broader and much more far-reaching factors. Two of these factors are of particular interest in this connection.

The first is the respective dissimilarity of Babylonian and Byzantine Karaism in matters of background, origin, chronology, and position in history. Babylonia's long-standing tradition as a leading world-center of Jewry at large could not fail to encourage also the self-assertive tendencies of the local sectaries there. These tendencies were enhanced further by the history of sectarianism proper. Persia and Babylonia were the cradles of Karaism much as they were the cradles of Rabbinitism. There the ideological and historical foundations of Karaism were laid; there the sect assumed its independent shape and offered the first formulation of its religious and scholastic creed. When, some time in the ninth century, the young dissident center of Palestine and the Palestino-centric ideology, whatever their *subsequent* success and importance, came into being, the Babylono-Persian Karaite community boasted already of a generations-long history of independent experience.

The situation in Byzantium was entirely different. Byzantine Karaism appeared on the scene at a relatively late date; the Palestinian center had in the meantime consolidated into the most important (if not wholly uncontested) spiritual power in the Karaite world. Moreover, the builders of the Byzantine branch of the sect were, according to our reconstruction, immigrants from the Near East, from the provinces of Syria and (later) Egypt, i.e., from those very territories which were all through the ages within the orbit of Palestinian influence. These immigrants had observed the Palestino-centric mode of calendation even before their removal to Byzantium; as will be noted later in this chapter, also those of their compatriots who preferred not to leave the old Islamic environment persevered (down to early modern times) in their adherence to the Palestinian calendar. The Palestino-centricism of Byzantine Karaites was, then, in a way, a natural *continuation* of the original attitude of their ancestors in the "old country."

Nor, be it noted immediately, did this attitude run counter to the sentiments of *general* Byzantine Jewry. Unlike Babylonia, the Jewry of the Empire never cherished a tradition of leadership or aspired to a

first-rank position in the Jewish world. If there were any proud recollections of a more illustrious past left in the Byzantine communities, they surely harked back to the time when precisely Palestine was the leading member among the Jewries of the Roman Empire. Such recollections could not, then, assume a competitive anti-Palestinian character. Indeed, even if some Byzantino-centric sentiments were to communicate themselves to the local *Rabbanite* population, they hardly could be shared by the *Karaite* newcomers from the Muslim East; the latter obviously needed time in which to develop a sense of attachment to the new locale and to Byzantine continuity and tradition. When that sense was actually developed in the third and fourth generations of Byzantine-born Karaites to the extent that it, indeed, motivated significant changes in the sect's life and thought on Byzantine soil, the Palestinian center reached, due to powerful external causes, the end of its historical path. The Seljūk Turks and the Crusaders caused the Jerusalem Karaite community to descend from the stage of history. A Palestino-Byzantine intra-Karaite feud could simply never materialize.

THE NEW PALESTINIAN SPIRIT

The other reason for the Byzantino-Babylonian divergence of attitude toward Palestine—beside the aforesaid intrinsic dissimilarities—was the crucial change which occurred about a century after al-Ḳūmisī in the "Palestine-versus-Diaspora" philosophy of the Palestinian Karaite ideologists themselves. Unlike Babylonian Karaism which collided in the late ninth century with the exuberant, immature, fanatical and intolerant Palestinian exclusivism of the al-Ḳūmisī brand, the Karaites of Byzantium encountered an entirely different school of Palestino-centricism.

Now, the general ripeness, maturity, realism, and high scholastic achievement of what we have labeled "The Later Golden Age of Palestinian Karaism" had already been noted at the beginning of Chapter V of the present study. Suffice it to stress here the new, realistic brand of Palestino-centricism which also developed during that Later Golden Age and which [so we learn from Levi ben Yefeth] was far removed from the original, uncompromising policies of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī. Aware of the impracticability of a general Jewish exodus from the Diaspora, later Palestinian leadership repudiated in equal measure the position of the Palestinian zealots and that of the Babylono-centric extremists. There was really no justification [so ran the argument] for presenting the problem

as a choice between physical transfer to the Holy Land or a total surrender in the Diaspora of Palestinian-inspired injunctions (such as the *abīb*). A middle course must be found, based on the preservation of Palestinian prerogatives and the simultaneous recognition of a coexistent diasporic Karaism.

Adjustments to exilic conditions are inevitable, the Palestinians now admitted. While—to take the example of *abīb*—the Karaites of Palestine, capable of following the growth of the new crop on the spot, are in the position to fix the New Year accurately (*'al ha-'emeth*), their coreligionists in the Diaspora must resign themselves to logical deduction (*haḥrabah* or *hagbarah*). Such considerations, however, pertain solely to matters of form and to the degree of rigor expected outside Palestine. They must not affect the religio-legal premises on which the adopted practices are based. These premises—the later school remained adamant on that point no less than its radicalist predecessors led by al-Ḳūmisī—must not fail to be consistent with the Palestino-centric orientation; historical precedents, such as those found in the late biblical books reflecting diasporic conditions (the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles), show that a Palestinian orientation is answering both the needs of men and the will of God.⁵²

⁵² Of the comprehensive, hitherto unpublished discussion in *Levi's Book of Precepts*, 19b ff., I have communicated a passage in *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 29, note 65a, on the basis of a microfilm copy of Leiden MS Warner No. 22 at my disposal. This passage, from fols. 20b–21a, is reproduced here in an expanded form: [מקראי ארץ (= לקראי בבל) באש' מן בבלול ופוזר האומה בארצות ולא יגיע אליהם הדבר וכי ידענו כי ישראל כבר הגלום מלכי אשור והולכיכם בגולה וכי זה החשבון מחדש אחר חרבן הבית השני: ובאין פוגה (= ספק) כי כבר היה יקרה להם כאש' יקרה לנו היום: ולו רצה הקב"ה מהם שיעשו על דבר אחר היו הנביאים כבר היו יזברו אותו או היו ישראל מעתיקים אותו: ולפי שידענו הגדות הרבנים הראשונים כי הם יעשו על הירח ועל האביב אחר חרבן בית שני. שלם לנו חפצנו מאש' אמרנו כי אנתנו מצויהם על פי דעתנו או אש' נקריב בדעתנו והוא אלטרין (= אלטן = אלטן?) : ואם נספקנו בו (= ר"ל באביב) חייב שנשמר באש' יתחייב עלינו בירה: מפני כי הוא בדרך שמו אש' פוזרנו בכל הארצות ולא יקבצנו זולתו: ראש' אמ' כי ישראל נתחייב עליהם שיבואו בכל לבם אל ארץ יש[ראל] זה דבר רחוק כי לא יתכן זה בבל [ה]אמה: וכן רבר מי יאמר כי מצוות נופלות ממנו ואינם חייבים עלינו בזמן הגלות לזו העילה: והוא כי לא נדע מתי ימצא האביב בארץ יש': וגם זה רחוק כי יתכן למקצתם דעת האביב על האמת ומקצתם יקריבו מדעתם על אלטרין ומקצתם יראה שמירת החדש השני כאש' ישמרו היום השני אם לא יראו הירח: ויש עלינו מצות רבות בגלות ומהם (= מקראי בבל) אמרו כי הקב"ה אמ' Cf. further the as yet unpublished fol. 20a: אש' זו צורתם לאנשי הגלות ושבת עד י"י אלהיך ושמעת בקולו ככל אשר אנבי מצוך היום וגו': ואנשי גלו' אשר בארצות הגלות הגלו' הם יעשו על הירח ועל האביב אחר חרבן בית שני. This exposition of Deut. 4:30 should be compared with the earlier Palestino-centric interpretation, reproduced above, 299, note 19.

(As for the expression *אלטרין* in the text quoted first in the present note, Bashyachi [*Addereth*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḥodesh*, Chapter XXXVII, 35a] explains it: וירצה באמרו [ה]אמת. The latter term appears very frequently in the late Byzantine Hebrew literature. Cf. Bashyachi's Introduction to his *Addereth*: לומר הגברת: השכל והמדע זה כשלא ממצאו עליו מצוה כתובה בתורה או שיצא מהקש מצוה אחרת השכל גזר חובן המצוה ההיא בהתרם. See my "Elijah Bashyachi," *Tarbiz*, XXV [1955–56], 56, note 42.)

This new concept of Palestino-centricism came too late to change the attitude of the Karaites of Babylonia. The damage could not be undone. As evident from Levi ben Yefeth's disputations with the Babylonians along the *new* lines of Palestino-centric reasoning, there was no remedy for the two- or three-generation old *complete* rift between Karaite Palestine and Babylonia. But the new ideology proved an important contribution to the molding of healthy relations between the Jerusalem Karaite institutions and other diasporic Karaite communities. Especially the rising center on the Bosporus was constructively assisted in its development by this new spirit permeating the later Palestinian Karaite leadership. A guiding spirit it was, strengthening, on the one hand, the ties between the Empire's Karaites and the Land of Israel, and, on the other hand, recognizing compromise and adjustment where compromise and adjustment were imperative.

SIGHTING THE "ABIB"

A calendar system which was to serve and be put to work by an almost exclusively *urban* population, yet was based on regular yearly observations of *agricultural* phenomena, had its inherent difficulties. Watching the barley grow and compiling progress reports on the ripening stages of the new crop tended to become increasingly complicated even in Palestine proper. Indeed, both the Karaites, who shouldered the burden as best they could, and their Rabbanite neighbors, who were curious onlookers in the annually recurring spectacle of Karaite perplexity, were acutely aware of the situation.

Now [complainingly states Levi ben Yefeth], those who preceded us [followed the *abib*] on the basis of their own actual acquaintance with, and knowledge of the seeds, since they themselves cultivated and inherited the soil. Thus, they used to inform each other [of the state of crops], and [their procedure] would be unquestionably correct. [Nowadays, unfortunately], all these things have become difficult for us, since all the land is not ours and most of us are incapable of recognizing the seed Hence, whenever the inquirer wants to obtain the necessary information, he turns to those who till the soil and asks them, "What is your procedure [this year] with regard to harvesting your crop?" And he proceeds to act according to the answer [and determines the New Year].⁵³

The humorous situations, inevitably arising from the above difficulties,

⁵³ See Levi ben Yefeth in the above-quoted Leiden MS of his *Book of Precepts*, Warner No. 22, 30a-b: והיו שם כובשים והיו שם קדמונו] מהכרתם וידיעתם הזרע: והיו שם כובשים כי כל הארץ ויורשים אדמתם. והיו מודיעים מקצתם והיה ישר עליהם: אבל נחקשה עלינו כל הדברים כי כל הארץ אינה לנו ומרביחיתנו לא יכירו הזרע. . . וכי ירצה הדורש לדרוש על זה יאמר לעובדי האדמה איך מנהגכם שחקצרו זרעכם . . . ויעשה על הצורה הזכורה. The excerpt was first published in my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the first Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 30, note 66a.

would, of course, not get lost on the Rabbanites who made the most of the Karaite confusion. Practical jokers would teasingly inquire among their sectarian neighbors about the progress of the ripening of peas and beans. The Karaites, on their part, could not but pray and hope for the best and rely on the information supplied to them by farmers. It is simply pathetic to observe the humorless Levi ben Yefeth taking Rabbanite teasing quite seriously and exclaiming in all earnestness that, by God, never were peas considered by the Karaites the right determinant of a leap-year!

Now, we are not going to be deterred by those who allege that there are among us some who determine the *abib* by beans and peas. Why, such method is unknown to the Karaites! All that the men who spread such tales are after is to slander the Karaites, so that the rift may grow deeper. Therefore, they invent all sorts of would-be doctrines and ways, list certain similarities and point to the resulting difficulties, then they pin it on the Karaites and associate it with them so that the fools may hear it and run away from the [Karaite] religious practice.⁵⁴

On the other hand, however, some extremely pious (and ignorant) Rabbanites felt safer having it both ways. Accordingly, they would follow the Karaite *abib* method, while retaining at the same time the basic Rabbanite calendar computation. This is, at least [so we recall], what a Karaite missionary tells us with regard to Jews of Jerusalem and Ramlah in the tenth century.⁵⁵

Now, if the Palestinian Karaite center had its share of difficulties regarding the carrying out of on-the-spot observations of *abib*, how much more so the young Karaite community in far-off Byzantium. Sporadic ruptures in communication with Palestine, even prior to the Crusades, often caused delays in the flow of the necessary *abib* information from the Holy Land to the Byzantine settlements. Such occurrences perforce made the task of Rabbanite polemicists increasingly easier,

⁵⁴ Levi's words are usually quoted in paraphrase as reported by Aaron ben Elijah in *Gan 'Eden*, 18b: ר' לוי נ"ע שחכמי הרבנים צודים לחכמי הקראים כדי להוציא עליהם אמר ר' לוי נ"ע שחכמי הרבנים צודים לחכמי הקראים, כי זה הדת לא נשמע בין רבה, אומרים כי יש להם מי שיעשה האביב על העדשים, וזה בדיאוח לב מהם, כי זה הדת לא נשמע בין ריבם תאלמנה שפתי שקר הדבורות עלינו עתק ואומרים שהקראים יעשו: האביב עם סול ועדשי' וזה לא נשמע בספרי החכמינו ואמר ה"ר לוי [=בן יפת] הלוי כי לא דרש זה האומר זה המאמר אלא להוציא דבה ואני אומר ומוציא דבה הוא כסיל.

The original statement from Levi ben Yefeth's *Book of Precepts* (Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 23a) was first published in my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 31, note 67. It reads as follows: ולא נביט לדבר מי אמ' בעבורנו כי בהם מי שיעשה על הפול ועל העדשים בי זה דרך לא נודע בין הקראים ולא דרש זה האומר אלא להוציא דבה עליהם וירבה החלוקה ויעמיד דתות ודרבנים ויביא להם דמיון ופוגה ויחברם ויסמך אותם על הקראין עד שישמעו הפתיים וינוסו מן הדת.

⁵⁵ Cf. the latter part of the exhortation by Sahl ben Mašliah, as quoted above, 253, note 2, and 271, note 55.

while the local Karaites themselves were filled with misgivings as to the correctness of their calendar. With all the goodwill and determination of local Karaite leadership to follow the lead of Palestine, the situation was perplexing indeed. Something had to be done about it—and fast. No wonder that an official query was addressed by the Byzantine Karaites to the sectarian authorities in the Holy City, asking them how to act in the case of doubt.

THE CALENDAR QUERY

The writers of the letter were Tobias ben Moses and his colleagues who, as we know, acted as the communal and religious leaders of Byzantine Karaism from the fifth decade of the eleventh century on.⁵⁶ However, there is no certainty as to the identity of the Palestinian leader who answered the query. Pinsker's suggestion that it was Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, the last great representative of sectarian learning in the Holy City, has much to commend it but still needs corroboration.⁵⁷

The story itself of the eleventh-century Byzantine-Palestinian exchange of letters on the subject is known to us only from the century-later communication of Yehūdah Hadassī. Neither the precise text of the Byzantine query nor the original version of the Palestinian reply have been preserved.⁵⁸ True, as Pinsker informs us, the nineteenth-century Abraham Firkowicz claimed that among the Karaite manuscripts of the Gozlow library which perished in the course of the Crimean War was a "priceless epistle" appended to the exegetical composition of Tobias ben Moses. This epistle [Firkowicz argued] was "a reply to him [i.e., to Tobias] from Jerusalem, no doubt from his master R. Yeshū'ah."⁵⁹ However, the acceptance at face value of such testimony, claiming the one-time existence of the document in Gozlow, depends entirely on the extent of credence one is ready to lend to the word of

⁵⁶ Cf. above, 53.

⁵⁷ See *Likḳūṭē*, App. XI, 93 f. It is to be added, however, that the other conclusions drawn by Pinsker in this connection—namely, that Yeshū'ah was the teacher of Tobias during the latter's sojourn in Jerusalem, and that he answered the query of his pupil in the form of a book entitled *Oṣar Neḥmad*—have all proved untenable. Cf. my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," and my Hebrew essay in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955), 44 ff. See also above, 49 ff. (and notes).

⁵⁸ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76a, Alphabet 187: וככה שאול נשאל לפני אבלי משכילי ג'ע בירושלים: עיר הקדש האלהים אלהינו יכוננה עד עולם סלה: בימינו ובימי כל חרדי ה': המתאווים לראות ישועת אלהיך: יחד שאלוהו מלפניהם משכילי ג'ע מבני קושטנדינא טוביא המשכיל ר'אית' [=ירוח ה' תניחנן] ורולת— Hadassī undoubtedly drew his information from one of the late volumes of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* (probably that which dealt with Lev. 23). See on it in the next chapter, notes 48 and 210.

⁵⁹ Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. XI, 94, note 1.

a Firkowicz. The fact is that another letter concerning Tobias ben Moses (and actually published by Firkowicz) has been pronounced spurious by modern authorities.⁶⁰

In all events, the correspondence itself between Tobias ben Moses and the Jerusalem Karaite savants cannot be doubted. There is no vital necessity to connect such exchange with any special external or internal developments; the difficulty was *always* there. Nevertheless, chances are that the sending of the query was prompted by the particularly confused situation in the early 70's of the eleventh century, when conquering Seljūk troops were harassing regular communication between Palestine and the Empire. Following the Seljūk conquests of Manzikert and Jerusalem in 1071, pilgrim and other traffic between Byzantium and the Holy Land reached the low point.

"It is remarkable [says Runciman, summarizing the effects of the Seljūk victories on East-West communication] that there were still travelers, not only Muslims but also Christian pilgrims from the West. The pilgrim traffic had never entirely ceased, but the journey was now very difficult. Anatolia could now be traversed only if the voyager took an armed escort; and even so the way was full of danger, and wars and hostile authorities often held him up. Syria was little better. Everywhere there were brigands on the roads; and at each small town the local lord tried to levy a tax on passers-by. The pilgrims that succeeded in overcoming all the difficulties returned to the West weary and impoverished, with a dreadful tale to tell."⁶¹

True, there is some reason to believe that Jewish travelers preferred the maritime route from Byzantium to Egypt and proceeded thence to Palestine. But the last leg of that route was now no less precarious than the Anatolian highway. Here, too, traffic of merchants and pilgrims has reached its nadir.

The reply of the Jerusalem sages was realistic. Mindful of the objective difficulties, the Palestinian leaders actually confirmed the path of inevitable adjustment, the way it was already foreshadowed in the legislation of earlier Palestinian Karaite jurists (such as Levi ben Yefeth)⁶² and

⁶⁰ Cf. Firkowicz's *Benē Reshef*, 15 ff., and P. F. Frankl's reproduction and incisive critique of the text in "Karäische Studien," *MGWJ*, XXV (1876), 56 ff. This letter purported to demonstrate the alleged existence in Constantinople of an *early* eleventh-century Tobias ben Moses, called *hab-Bakī*, as distinguished from a *late* eleventh-century Tobias ben Moses, called *ham-Ma'iik*. See also next chapter, notes 172, 212.

⁶¹ S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, I, 78 f.

⁶² See the explicit mention of Levi (שִׁיךְ בֶּן טַעִיר הַלֵּוִי), below, 326, note 64. This accords with the excerpt from Levi's *Book of Precepts* reproduced above, 321, note 52.

the way it was followed in all other matters by the sect's local leadership in Byzantium.⁶³ The advice, then, was to follow in the meantime the Rabbanite way of calendation, pending a report from Palestine, and to afterwards also celebrate the date proclaimed by the Karaite authorities in the Holy Land (to the extent of its practicability, of course):⁶⁴

Every person who is in doubt in the Diaspora as to the witnessing of the New Moon and the *abib* as well as concerning all other commandments should follow *both* [ways]. This pertains to prayer and to observing [the correct rules of the festivals] so that [the feasts] would not be desecrated.⁶⁵

"ABIB" MESSAGES FROM JERUSALEM

However, in the event of timely arrival of letters from Jerusalem with the necessary information on the state of *abib* in Palestine, the matter would be entirely different. Byzantine Karaite leadership would then unequivocally follow the instructions issued by the Palestinian mentors.

Thus, in the case of an unusually early ripening of barley in Palestine, the twelfth month of the Karaite calendar-year, *Adār*, would yield to *Nisan*, the first month of a new year. Indeed, an actual occurrence is cited when the Purim Festival, due to fall, as a rule, in the middle of *Adār*, was shelved altogether to make way for Passover, which falls in the middle of the succeeding month of *Nisan*.⁶⁶

⁶³ Cf. the analysis of that policy in Chapter V, above.

⁶⁴ Cf. Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76a, Alphabet 187: כּוּוּ הַחֲשׂוּבָה אֵלֵיהֶם סְגוּלָה: כּוּוּ בְלוּיָהּ בְּרֹדֶה וּמְסַלְלָה: כּל הַמְּסַפֵּק בְּגִלּוֹת לַעֲדוּת הִירַח וְהָאִיבִיב וּבְכֹלל הַמְּצוֹת שְׁנַיִם יִתְמַשׁ בִּידוּ בַחֲפֵלָה חֹזֵר דֶּרֶךְ הַנִּכּוֹן בְּמִצְוֹת ה' לִפְנֵי כָל תְּרֵדֵי נוֹרָא עֲלֵיָהּ: אִף בְּסַפְרֵיהֶם: Hadassī adds: וּבְשִׁמְרָהּ בְּלִי לַחֲלָלָה כִּךְ הוּדִיעַ וְכִתְבוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַשְׁוֹאֲלִים בְּאוֹצֵר תַּחֲמָד: וְיִקְרָא הַגְּדוּל: לַהֲסַנְיָלָה: אִף שִׁיךְ בֶּן סַעִיר הָלִוי כִּךְ הוּדִיעַ בְּסַמְרוֹ וּרְמָו בְּרֹבֵר הַזֶּה טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִן הָאֶחָד וּגְוִי טוֹב אֲשֶׁר תֵּאָחֵז בּוֹה וּגַם מִזֶּה אֵל תַּעַן יָדֶךָ כִּי יֵרָא אֱלֹהִים יִצְאֵ אֶת כֹּלֵם לַחֲלִילָה: עַד אֲשֶׁר יִבִּין בְּאַחֲרֵית בְּרוּךְ חֲכָמָתוֹ וּבִהְעִבְרַת דַּעְתּוֹ וּיְשׁוּב אֶל הַעֲקָר בְּצוּרֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ.

⁶⁵ Starr's interpretation of the text to the effect that "the responsum advised in a conciliatory tone that in the event of doubt arising, they [i.e., the Karaites] were to follow the Rabbanite practice" (*Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 243), is inaccurate. The responsum suggests rather rigor by way of celebrating both dates—that of the Rabbanites, arrived at by calculation, and that of the Karaites based on a report from Palestine—in order to avoid the slightest chance of desecrating a holiday. This, incidentally, was in full accord with the *general* slant toward rigor which characterizes Karaite legislation. Note the explicit inclusion in this rule of "all commandments," not only those pertaining to calendation: כּל הַמְּסַפֵּק בְּגִלּוֹת לַעֲדוּת הִירַח וְהָאִיבִיב וּבְכֹל לַמְּצוֹת. So also Hadassī, in his comment on the text: חֹזֵר דֶּרֶךְ הַנִּכּוֹן בְּמִצְוֹת ה'. This was, similarly, the basic concept of Levi ben Yefeth whom Hadassī mentions in this connection. Cf. Levi's *Book of Precepts*, Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 59b: חֹזֵר עֲלֵינוּ לַהֲשִׂיא כָל מִצְוָה עַל: דֶּרֶךְ תַּמּוּר.

⁶⁶ That case is reported by Levi ben Yefeth in Leiden MS Warner No. 22, 21b f.: רַשְׁמֵו זְמַן הַמּוֹרִים סַפֵּחַ וּבְטוֹל הַמּוֹרִים. The story is retold from Levi's *Book of Precepts* by Aaron ben Elijah, *Gan 'Eden*, 21d. Aaron placed the event in the year 1006–7, which, we recall, is the only date explicitly mentioned in the code (see above, 303, note 29).

Reverse cases were even more frequent. Situations would arise in which the new grain in Palestine was reported not yet to have shown signs of ripeness in the month following *Adār*. A proclamation of a leap-year would follow. This meant the postponement of Passover to a date later by a whole month than the one marked on the Rabbanite calendar. The Karaites would then have their (first) month of *Nisan* parallel the Rabbanite (second) month of *Iyyār*, the Karaite *Iyyār* correspond to the Rabbanite *Sīwan*, and so on. A case of this kind is, in fact, reported for the year 1061–62. The discrepancy must have caused quite a stir, so much so that *both* differing dates were entered into a marriage contract issued in Fustāṭ, Egypt.⁶⁷ The possibility should not be excluded, as we shall see later, that the year in which the difference between the Karaite and Rabbanite calendars was marked in the Egyptian *kethubbah* was identical with the year in which a feud over a similar discrepancy (to be discussed presently) burst into the open in Byzantium.⁶⁸

It is not difficult to guess that the Rabbanites, sharing with the sectaries the same neighborhood in the Byzantine capital and elsewhere in the Empire,⁶⁹ would not conceal their annoyance with Karaite defiance of their holidays. Such defiance not only involved, as in the last-mentioned case, the use of leavened bread (*ḥameṣ*) by the Karaites during the week of the Rabbanite Passover; it also was accompanied, in all instances of a calendar discrepancy, by a regular pursuit of economic activities in the same quarter by members of one party, while the other party celebrated a holiday and refrained from work. A contest of strength would be inevitable.

In the first place, surely, not all the instances of friction between the two factions in Byzantine Jewry, caused by late (or early) sighting of the *abib*, were put on record. Also, not all the documents that may have contained references to such facts had hitherto been recovered or edited. Yet, the fact that none of the Karaite texts from Byzantium, published so far, lists any specific case to this effect is perhaps significant.

⁶⁷ Cf. the document published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 173 f. (App. IV). The *kethubbah* was signed on 1062, on the ninth day of what to the Karaites was the eleventh month of *Shebāt*. The Rabbanites, so we read, considered it to be the month of *Adār*: ביום החמישי בשבוע שהוא יום תשיעי מחודש שבט והוא חודש אדר לשנת החלוף בין עדת הרבנים ביום החמישי ביום הקראים היא אלה ושלש מאות ושלש ושבועים שנה למספר יונים בארץ מצרים. Obviously, in the previous spring the Karaites sighted the *abib* one month after the beginning of the precalculated Rabbanite month of *Nisan*.

⁶⁸ See below, 334.

⁶⁹ Cf. the discussion of the problem of Karaite-Rabbanite proximity of dwellings, above, 144 ff., 147.

To be sure, we do have occasional mentions of feuds stemming from differences in calendar. As we shall see, however, these differences resulted not from *abīb* reports, which were decisive in determining the beginning of *years*, but from Karaite insistence on lunar observation in determining the beginning of *months*.⁷⁰ It has to be noted also that all these texts belong to periods later than that which is covered by the present volume.

Hence, rather than infer, for lack of Karaite data to this effect, the absence in Byzantium of calendar quarrels even when Palestinian *abīb* reports conflicted with Rabbinic computation, one should better suspect that post-Crusade Karaism did not deem it important or advisable to preserve the records of such quarrels. This attitude, seemingly strange at first glance, was not at all accidental, as will be explained at a later stage of this study.⁷¹ Suffice it to stress here that collisions caused by *abīb* reports *did* occur in Byzantium during the eleventh century.

One grave incident of this kind is, indeed, related in a private letter of a Byzantine Rabbanite to his learned brother in Fustāṭ.⁷² Moreover, the wording of the letter clearly indicates that the incident to be described was not the first "affair of the nonconformist Karaites, may they be accursed!"⁷³

THE THESSALONICAN FEUD

The exact location of the writer is unknown. Thessalonica was suggested by Mann, because of a reference to the presence of Jewish merchants from Russia. Russian traders, so it is attested by several documents, were wont to participate in the famous Thessalonican fair of St. Deme-

⁷⁰ See further in this chapter, 346 ff.

⁷¹ Cf. below, 345.

⁷² Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 48 ff. A short excerpt of the letter was reproduced in Assaf-Mayer's *Sefer hay-Yishshūb*, II, 107b, No. 22. For an abridged English version see Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 182 ff., No. 125.

Incidentally, here is an additional illustration of the maintenance of ties with the "old country" by eleventh-century Jews who moved from the Islamic regions into Byzantium. Cf. above, 110 f., 117, note 107a, 198 f., note 107.

⁷³ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 49: על עסק הקראים המחליפים, אדוורים הם. In an effort to place the text in the fifteenth century, S. Krauss ("Zu Dr. Manns historischen Texten," *HUCA*, X [1935], 291) suggested that the expression *ham-mahālifim* "scheint die Bedeutung von 'Geldwechsler' zu haben; solche waren unter den Karäern in Konstantinopel (es handelt sich um die türkische Zeit!) genug vorhanden, and gleich darauf wird in der Tat von gewissen Denaren gesprochen, nur scheint es mir die betreffenden Worte an eine unrichtige Stelle geraten sind."

Mann's "Rejoinder" (*HUCA*, X, 305 f.) has amply disposed of Krauss' criticism. As for the expression *mahālifim*, there is no reason, in the literary context of the time,

trius.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Starr's suggestion of Constantinople⁷⁵ was based on the fairly plausible reasoning that only a large and well-organized community, such as that of the Karaites in the capital, would risk a showdown involving governmental intervention. Important details seem, however, to point to Thessalonica rather as the probable scene of the event discussed here.

As you know, my dear brother [writes the Rabbanite correspondent in Byzantium], the Karaites assaulted us *again* last year and desecrated the festivals of the Lord. They celebrated the New Year in the eighth month, for *they had received letters from Palestine* to the effect that no ripe barley [*abib*] was sighted in *Nisan*. Consequently, their Passover was celebrated in *Iyyār*. And at that time they thus committed evil things and God brought upon them confusion. Now, a violent enmity has developed between us and great quarrels have taken place.⁷⁶

The letter goes on to report that the Karaites have filed charges with the government against their Rabbanite neighbors. As a result of that, a heavy tax of close to a thousand dinars (*hyperpera*) was imposed by the Byzantine authorities on the Rabbanite faction in the city.⁷⁷

to interpret it other than "dissenters." It was a household word among polemicists on both sides of the fence. Indeed, in the very epistle under discussion we read: ואיך החליטו כל המצות. Moreover, the term was used not necessarily in a derogatory sense. Thus, Tobias ben Moses, the Karaite, uses the word *maḥalifim* with regard to his own coreligionists when stressing their dissent from a Rabbanite opinion. Cf. *ḥis Oṣar Nehmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 102b: ודע כי הרבנים ומקצת המחליפים להם והם מן חכמי עדת — הקראים וז"ל יאמ' — לדבנין והניחו דתם ונהיו קראיין.

On *maḥalifim* in the meaning of "Christians," see the texts adduced above, 180, notes 41–42.

⁷⁴ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 45, 50, and note 8a. Krauss' fanciful suggestion that *maḥalifim* is a hebraized form of the place-name "Rustchuk" cannot be taken seriously. For the St. Demetrius fair in Thessalonica, see above, 148, note 242.

⁷⁵ *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 184 and 243.

⁷⁶ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 49 f.: אבל זה ידוע לך אחי חביבי כי עוד נתגרו עלינו: הקרעים (*sic!*) בשנה שעברה וחיללו את מועדי יי המקודשים ועשו ראש השנה בחדש השמיני כי ק ב ל מ כ ת ב י מ א ד ק י ש [ר א ל] כי לא נראה אביב בניסן ונעשה חספס באייר ולפי הזמן נתקלקלו והממם האל ונפלה שנאה ואיבה גדולה בינינו ונהיו מחלקות גדולות. The misspelled הקרעים may very well be a scribal error or a pun on חספס. Cf. Mann's note *ad loc.* The expression החדש השמיני brings to mind I Kings 12:32–3, where Jeroboam's deviation from the regular calendar is deplored.

A Genizah sample of an Arabic letter, concerning the state of new crop in different regions of Palestine, was published by Assaf in *Sefer hay-Yishshūb*, II, 45a, No. 9 (along with a Hebrew translation). The letter, sent to the Karaite leadership in Fustāt by an official of the Karaite Patriarchate in Jerusalem, was now edited and translated in full by J. Eliash, "New Information on Eleventh-century Palestine" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* (Ben-Zvi Institute), II (1958), 18 ff. (§4).

No comparable text of such Palestinian message to the Byzantine Karaite community has so far been found and published.

⁷⁷ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 50: והלשינו את הרבנים ונהיה עונש בקהל קרוב אלף וינר[ים]. The emendations attempted on the closing word of this phrase did not

This information is highly revealing. For it is a fact that a tax of one thousand hyperpera was actually collected annually from Thessalonican Jewry. The tax was insisted upon even by the fifteenth-century Venetian rulers as an impost of long standing; despite the numerical and economic decline of the local Jewish population, the Venetians refused to reduce its accustomed (*solitum*) high rate.⁷⁸ Considering the non-uniform imperial policy governing Jewish taxation, one should perhaps view the yearly levy of one thousand hyperpera, imposed on the community of Thessalonica, as going back to the eleventh-century incident described in our Genizah epistle.⁷⁹

Chances are, indeed, that an echo of these events reaches us through the Rabbanite homilist, Tobias ben Eliezer, who, we remember, resided in Thessalonica in the closing years of the eleventh century.⁸⁰ Tobias, as we shall see, could hardly have witnessed the incident with his own eyes; yet, he must have heard Thessalonican Jews complain about the troublesome taxes incurred by the incident. Commenting on the Canticles, he has found the occasion fit for the following remark:

prove fully satisfactory, as Starr correctly observed in his note, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 184.

Thus, Mann's suggestion, *Texts and Studies*, I, 50, note 6—אישרי, i.e., ὑπερπερα—won the concurrence of Krauss, *HUCA*, X (1935), 291, although Mann would surely not agree with Krauss' reasoning. The latter, consistent with his late dating of the document, was impressed by the Greek term for coinage which "versetzt uns in die erste türkische Zeit (um 1450), da noch die alten griechischem Münznamen im Schwange waren." However, precisely Krauss' argument makes us mindful of the fact that it was not before the thirteenth century that the hyperperon replaced the nomisma. Cf. Andréadès, "De la monnaie . . . dans l'Empire byzantin," *Byzantion*, I (1924), 75 ff., esp. 75 and 78. How could, then, such coin be mentioned in the eleventh century?

On the other hand, the graphically more plausible solution offered by F. Perles in his review of Mann's book, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXXVI (1933), 537 f., esp. the end-remark on 538—"statt des rätselhaften אפרגין אפרגין zu lesen ist אפרגין, d.i. ὑπαργυρος], 'silberhaltig'"—is incompatible with the general connotation of dinars as gold coins. (Incidentally, the hyperpera were, much like their forerunners, the nomismata, a gold currency; cf. Andréadès, *op. cit.*)

⁷⁸ Cf. Starr, *Romania*, 78, 113, 114.

⁷⁹ The term 'onesh, as used in medieval Hebrew texts, means both "penalty" and "regular tax." It appears in another late eleventh-century Genizah epistle from Thessalonica, in connection with the messianic commotion in the city in 1096 (cf. Mann, *Hattekūfah*, XXIII [1925], 257; see above, 148, note 244). The term was found also by the Byzantine Karaite, Jacob ben Reuben, in an eleventh-century Byzantine Hebrew translation of a Karaite commentary on Isaiah, and was reproduced by him in the as yet unpublished Isaiah Section of his *Sefer ha-'Osher*, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 140a: זה המס וענשים, (יש' ט' ג), עול סבלו. See also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 4, end of note 1.

On Jewish taxation in Byzantium see the special paragraph in Chapter IV, above, 182 ff.

⁸⁰ Cf. above, 148, note 244.

"My mother's children were angry with me" (Cant. 1:6)—these are the sinners in Israel who bring evil upon Israel through heresy and *cause Israel to give money to the Gentiles*. For, as long as the Israelites refrain from heresy, the Gentile nations would not take away their money.⁸¹

This anti-sectarian allusion, to be sure, underlying the Byzantine Rabbanite interpretation of Cant. 1:6, did not remain unanswered. Contemporary Karaite scholars in the Empire promptly reciprocated by turning the edge of the same verse against the "Shepherds of the Exile," i.e., the leaders of the normative majority.⁸²

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INCIDENT

If my suggestion concerning the allusion embodied in Tobias ben Eliezer's comment on Cant. 1:6 is correct, we shall perhaps be in a

⁸¹ In quoting the present passage I followed Jellinek, in his Appendix to *Commentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liede*, 68; Greenup's edition of *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on the Canticles seems to me, at least in this instance, faulty. The correct version reads: בני אמי נחרו בי. אלו פושעי ישראל שהם מריעין את ישראל מן המינות וגורמין לו ליתן ממון לגוים. שכל שישראל נמנעין מן המינות אין אומות העולם נוטלין ממנה שני' תחת אשר לא עברת את ה' (רב' כ"ח כז) ועברת את בני אמי נחרו בי. אלא (!) פושעי ישראל שהם מריעים את: אוריכך (שם, כח) ישראל מן המצוות (ו) וגורמין לו ליתן ממון לגוים שכל זמן שישראל נמנעין מין(ו) המינות אומות העולם נוטלין ממנה שני' תחת אשר לא עברת את יי' ועברת את אוריכך.

Apart from evident orthographical errors in the text quoted last, there is also a difference of content between the two versions. While, in the first, *minūth* means intra-Jewish heresy, in the other it denotes outright apostasy. Following this distinction, the first text implies that, as long as the Jews keep their unity and refrain from sectarian dissensions, the Gentile governments *will not* take away their money (in taxes, etc.). *Minūth* may also denote here Gentile courts to which the "sinners in Israel" have brought their suit against the Rabbanite Jewish community.

The other version, however, intends to convey that as long as the Jews refrain from apostasy (to Christianity) the Gentile nations *will continue* to take away their money. The author deals, then, with the general position of the Jew among Gentiles and has no specific incident in mind. It is difficult to see, therefore, in what way precisely the "sinners in Israel" (פושעי ישראל), against whom, after all, the verse was invoked, have been responsible for this general status of Jewry.

Of course, it would prove almost impossible to demonstrate the originality of a passage in a work so eclectic as *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* of Tobias ben Eliezer. I am satisfied, however, that the comment in question appears in none of the Midrashim on Canticles that served as Tobias' standard sources. In fact, Jellinek pointed out in his Introduction (*Commentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liede*, xi) that he had chosen, out of the whole commentary, only "die einfachsten, von dem Anstrich der Hagada freien, Erläuterungen." Hence, he, too, when including our text in his selection of excerpts, must have been convinced of the originality of Tobias' interpretation.

In brief: Even allowing for certain elements of earlier homilies, the special twist in our passage belongs to the pen of Tobias ben Eliezer. By deviating from the elaborate and generally reiterated pattern of homily for the verse in question, the author obviously intended to convey an allusion to contemporary events that stood out vividly in the minds of his listening and reading audience.

⁸² Cf. Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher* on Canticles, 11c-d: שחררה אני (שה'ש א' ה). הם המלכים החוטאים [ירבעם בן נבט, אחאב, ומליצתו כי רוב ישראל על השקר. בני אמי (שם, ז).

because the leaf came down to us mutilated at the top.⁸⁴ Consequently, Starr dated it cautiously "ca. 1000–1100."⁸⁵

Now, it goes without saying that the epistle under review was written long after 1000 C.E., for the Karaite community appears to have been already quite strong numerically and well aware of its legal privileges. Similarly, it must be dated prior to the Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem (1099) and, very likely, even before the Seljūq successes of 1071. The channels of communication with Palestine were apparently still wide open so as to let instructions from an active Karaite community in the Holy Land reach the sectarian center in Byzantium, and arrive on time, too.

Moreover, since there is not as much as a hint of any extraordinary events of a broader nature, it can safely be assumed that the Crusaders were not even anticipated yet in the imperial territories.⁸⁶ In addition, the letter states explicitly that it describes a calendar feud which happened "last year."⁸⁷ Consequently, the *terminus ad quem* must not transgress the limit of 1095. Indeed, considering the fact that prompt communication with Palestine after 1071 was rather unusual, the events of "last year" could not have occurred later than 1070 C.E.

On the other hand, the *terminus a quo* also may not be pushed too far back. Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Canticles, this we know definitely, was composed in the time of the First Crusade.⁸⁸ While it carried allusions to events and conditions preceding that period, such allusions would be meaningless at the end of the eleventh century if they were not based on facts which still lingered in the memory of the community. True, the general terms in which the cited homily is couched show that Tobias was hinting at matters which belonged to the not very recent past

⁸⁴ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 48.

⁸⁵ Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 182.

⁸⁶ Thus, for instance, the Karaite report of the calendar dispute in Constantinople in 1097 over *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* (to be discussed later in this chapter) makes clear reference to the Crusaders reaching the Empire on their way to the East. Cf. below, 347, note 127.

⁸⁷ This statement should, however, be qualified to the effect that not a *whole* year has necessarily elapsed since the beginning of the feud. Naturally, a Rabbanite correspondent, adhering to a calendar-year that commences with *Tishri* and writing his epistle some time after the Feast of Sukkoth (which falls on *Tishri*), would refer to the Passover that fell on the past *Nisan* as "last year." The actual difference in time was half a year or so.

⁸⁸ Cf. the passage from *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Canticles, cited above, 263, note 34, the martyrdom of Jewish communities in the Rhineland at the hand of the is extolled as the fulfillment of what was meant by Cant. 1:3, "The maidens love thee." Tobias cites these events as ones "that happened." Cf. also the other references to the Crusades quoted in the above.

and which he knew from hearsay only. Yet, if our assumption be true that Tobias' homily had its roots in actual facts, these facts must have been known to all his listeners, even if only the older folk were capable of remembering them from personal experience. Thus, it seems to me, the beginning of the 60's of the eleventh century may be taken with a fair degree of probability as the *terminus a quo* for the Karaite-Rabbanite feud described in the undated Genizah document at hand. Considering the year 1070 as the other limit, one should place the incident some time in the seventh decade of the eleventh century.

Possibly, this general time bracket can be narrowed down even more, to the very year in which the aforesaid event had taken place in Thessalonica. Earlier we have quoted a Karaite marriage contract drawn up in Fustāṭ at the beginning of 1062 C.E.⁸⁹ A one-month discrepancy, as we gather from the *kethubbah*, was noted then between the Rabbanite and the Karaite calendars: What to the Karaites was (at the beginning of 1062) *Shebāt*, the eleventh month of their calendar-year, was to the Rabbanites the twelfth month, *Adār*. Obviously, at the beginning of that calendar-year, i.e., in spring 1061, the Fustāṭ Karaites celebrated the Passover a month later than the Rabbanites—much like in the case reported for Thessalonica—making their *Nisan* correspond to the Rabbanite *Iyyār*.

Now, there is no compelling reason to presuppose that both incidents, that of Fustāṭ and that of Thessalonica, happened in the same year. Theoretically, a conflict between an *abib* report from Palestine and the Rabbanite-computed calendar could occur in any and all of the ten years (1060–1070) in which we have placed the Thessalonican quarrel. In practice, however, for reasons inherent in the Jewish calendar, such one-month discrepancy did not—in fact, could not—repeat itself very often. Hence, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the dates of the Thessalonica and Fustāṭ calendar divergency are identical. The year in question was 1061. It was also some time close to the end of that year (and, at any rate, after the Festival of Booths) that the extant Genizah epistle was sent from Thessalonica to Fustāṭ.

GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTION

Apart from the intrinsic interest that the above story of the calendar quarrel evokes as an example of Karaite-Rabbanite relations at their worst, there is an additional implication therein which sheds new light

⁸⁹ Cf. above, 327, note 67.

on the status of Karaism in the Empire.⁹⁰ Significantly, the Rabbanite writer of the epistle had no comment on the nature of the charge which the Karaites had filed with the Byzantine authorities. He used, of course, the term *hilshinū*, imputing "denunciation," but he did not imply that the accusations were of a slanderous character. Also, when a special meeting of the Rabbanite congregation was subsequently convoked for the purpose of reading some anti-Karaite messages (sent by the writer's brother from Egypt),⁹¹ only the *religious* deviations of the Karaites were again cited.⁹² Except for these clichés of anti-Karaite polemics, not a word was uttered against the Karaites' costly invocation of governmental aid.

Now, in view of the financial and legal burden incurred on that occasion, the Rabbanites' silence on the nature of the Karaite charge is puzzling indeed. Had there been any real slander involved, the writer would have undoubtedly seized the opportunity to expatiate in a private(!) letter on the evil doings of the "accursed Karaites." It is apparent, then, that the Rabbanites felt all along that their sectarian neighbors were *within their legal rights* in opposing the Rabbanite pressure and in complaining to the government about it. Of course, the realization of this fact would not prevent the Rabbanites from pursuing an action dictated by their *religious* conscience, the secular law of Gentile rulers notwithstanding.

Thus, the above occurrence, unfortunately so meager in details, entitles us to infer that *the Karaites in the Empire enjoyed a status of religious autonomy within the framework of the Jewish community. This autonomy was officially recognized by government and safeguarded by law.* It granted the Karaites the rights and privileges of a self-containing religious unit with full jurisdiction over its own mode of life and ritual observances.⁹³ It insured freedom of worship without fear of being exposed, against the Karaites' own will, to possible interference by the normative Rabbanite majority.

Indeed, here perhaps the explanation can be found for the "partition"

⁹⁰ This point was first developed in my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXIV (1955), 35 f.

⁹¹ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, 50: ... ובחך אותם המחלקות והשנאה כי רבה תגיעו איגרותיך. . . . ובחולו של מועד של סוכות עשו קיבוץ ונתורעד כל הקהל כאיש אחד בכנסת הגדולה וקראו האגרות.

⁹² *Ibid.*: וכשמעו העם את דברי האגרות איך החליפו [=הקראים] את כל המצוות המו כל העם וברכו: אותך בשם ויענו כל העם אמן.

⁹³ For an example of such authority, wielded by Tobias ben Moses the Karaite already before 1048, see the discussion above, 53, and the quotations in notes 70-71 appended thereto.

(*mehiṣṣah*) which Benjamin of Tudela reported from the twelfth-century quarter of a Jewish guild in Péra.⁹⁴ Scholars speculate on the meaning of Benjamin's description. Some of them are inclined to attribute to the Spanish Rabbanite traveler the use of a mere figure of speech to allude to the *religious division* between Karaism and Rabbinism.⁹⁵ Others surmise that Benjamin saw an *actual fence or wall* dividing the dwellings of the five hundred Karaite families from the neighboring community of Rabbanites which was four or five times larger.⁹⁶ In the context of the present interpretation of the Genizah epistle, the latter solution seems more plausible.⁹⁷ Since, in spite of the recurrence of Rabbanite-Karaite feuds all over the East, nowhere else was such an arrangement introduced, it is very unlikely that the tangible division in Constantinople was effected on the initiative of either of the interested parties. Rather, following governmental intervention, *the wall was erected on advice (or, possibly, instructions) of the civil authorities of the capital* in order that the tension between the two warring camps be eased, especially on festivals falling on different dates. It cannot be said, however, whether such advice or instructions were issued in order to *prevent* the outbreak in Constantinople of hostilities similar to those of Thessalonica, or whether they came as *result* of some hostile (yet unrecorded) acts in the capital proper. The numerical strength of both factions in Péra and their residence in the same *migrash* make, of course, the second possibility very probable.

TWELFTH-CENTURY PERPLEXITIES

The destruction of the Karaite center in Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099 and the subsequent vicissitudes of the remnants of Karaism in the Holy Land proved to be a blow to the young Byzantine Karaite community in more than one way. At the same time, they also served as an incentive for courageous shouldering of responsibility by the Karaite Diaspora in a changing world. The general impact of the Crusades on

⁹⁴ See above, 146 f., and the Hebrew text on 144 f., note 221.

⁹⁵ Compare, however, the expression *וביניהם מחיצה*, which Benjamin uses in regard to the situation in Péra, with the expression *וביניהם שלום* in Benjamin's description of the interdenominational relations in Damascus. Cf. *Itinerary* (ed. Asher), I, 48; Eng. tr., 86. The *religious division*, after all, was the same in Damascus as it was in Péra.

⁹⁶ For the numbers see above, 35, note 23, 144, note 221, 146, and the discussion on 154 ff., esp. 161 f.

⁹⁷ Also Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 41 and 244, is inclined to accept the *mehiṣṣah* as a tangible fence dividing the two communities.

Byzantine Karaism cannot possibly be discussed here.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, it seems fit, when winding up our treatment of the *abīb* issue in the Empire, to include right here the little information we have from subsequent centuries.⁹⁹

The practice of determining intercalation by following reports on the ripening of new crop in Palestine was not abandoned, conditions permitting, even in the twelfth century. Or, shall we say rather, the efforts of conscientious leaders in this direction continued unabated in spite of the adverse circumstances. After all, communication with Palestine did not come to a complete halt, and the desire to see there a second renaissance of the sect was never really extinguished. Thus, we find the twelfth-century Yehūdāh Hadassī still enjoining his coreligionists to exert themselves in "inquiring and investigating and searching" among travelers and pilgrims returning from the Holy Land for every bit of information about the ripening of barley there.¹⁰⁰

To be sure, Hadassī knew only too well that this was no method to rely upon in the prevailing unpredictable conditions. He insisted, however, that no effort should be spared anyway, admitting that some ancillary devices might be necessary to make the old system work. Valuable clues can, for instance, be gathered from observing the position of the sun now and comparing it with the position of the sun on the corres-

⁹⁸ See, briefly, in the Epilogue, below. I have dealt partly with the problem in my paper, "Yehūdāh Hadassī and the Crusades," delivered before the American Academy for Jewish Research in December, 1952.

For the general Jewish story in the wake of the Crusaders' conquests, see Dina-burg [Dinur], "On the History of the Jews in Palestine in the Time of the First Crusade" (Hebrew), *Zion* (O.S.), II (1927), 38 ff.; the brief discussion by Strauss [Ashtor], *Toledoth hay-Yehūdīm be-Miṣrayim we Sūryah*, I, 35 ff.; J. Praver, *Mamlakheth Yerūshalayim haṣ-Ṣalbanīth*, 8, 50 ff.; and esp. his "The Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem" (Hebrew), *Zion*, XI (1945-46), 38 ff.; Goitein's new sources cited above, 189, note 75, and his later communications; and, most recently, Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, 106 ff. (and notes).

⁹⁹ This information was previously summed up in Part II of my "Some Aspects of Karaite-Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium on the Eve of the First Crusade," *PAAJR*, XXV (1956), 157-62.

¹⁰⁰ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76a-b, Alphabet 187: בנן גם כן לראיית עדות האביב נעמוד בו: בבלותינו ובארצנו: ונשמור ונעשה בו קדוש מצוינו: בכתוב (דב' ט"ז א) שמור את חודש האביב ועשית פסח לה' אלהיך וגו' בעין האמור לנו (דב' ה' יב) שמור את יום השבת לקדשו בבל קדושתנו: ... ובראש חודש ניסן נעין ונדרוש ונחקר ונשאל בשולו אולי נבין ממנו בלום בגירוחנו גדול עדות וראיה זו. הרגשה והגברה לנו במצות תורתנו בארץ ובחוצה לארץ במדבר: Alphabet 188: ובבל ובשאר גלותנו: אזי נעשה ונקיים שמירת חגיגנו וראיית דמות צורת האביב בשולו במצותנו: ... במנהג האכרים הקוצרים בארצנו: ... אבל חרחוקים מראיית עדות בשולו מארץ קדושתנו: דינם לחקר ולשאל לבאים שם אולי ישמרו ויתבררו מן שובניה ראייה בעדותנו: ... וע"כ אין אנחנו יודעים אי זו שנה י"ב חדש. ואי זו י"ג לערבה. אלא מעין רשמנו ארץ הקדושה בבלותנו וזו אשר בחטאינו וכעונות אבותינו עלינו ארכה.

ponding date in the preceding year. Reports on drought or abundance of rainfall may also prove useful. Similarly, a comparison of the weather now with what it was last year could yield an important lead.¹⁰¹ But, ultimately, Hadassi, too, could not help realizing that such efforts were expressions of piety rather than realistic guides toward a permanent solution of the calendar problem. He, therefore, suggested observing a pattern of successive units of two regular years to be followed by one leap-year. The proclamation of a leap-year was especially indispensable in the event of marked discrepancy between Greek Orthodox Easter and Rabbinical Passover.¹⁰²

In the light of what was said earlier in connection with the mutual interest of Christians and Jews in each others' system of calendation,¹⁰³ Hadassi's advice does not seem at all amazing. In Byzantium especially there was a keen consciousness of the Easter season and of the relation of Christian Easter to Jewish Passover. In the first place, Easter was the most important feast of the year throughout the Empire, so much so that the general term *εορτή*, i.e., holiday, was frequently used as a synonym thereof.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, the dates of Passover and of Easter were closely intertwined.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the Jews were made painfully aware of the importance of that season to their Christian neighbors through Justinian's prohibition of the public celebration of Passover

אף נעיין בתקופת השמש, אם במקום תוך המזרח: *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76b, Alphabets 187-88: עמד בשנת פשוטו ודאי גם האביב נחבשל בארצך: אי בנין בתקופת השמש במקום תבונתו בתבונת מקום שנת בשולו: ואם בנין בי יתבשל לגמרי בארצנו בי"ד בו כחדש ניסן בבשולו: אי נקדש אותו החדש ראשון בפולול: ואם לא באה השמש בתקופת שנת תבונתו בתבונת מקום שנת תבשילו: וכשנת בצורת היתה שנתו או מטר רב שלא בדרבו ושכילו ולא נחבשל האביב במצותו ורגלו: אין תא חדש ראשון כאזהרת תורתך: או אבל הרחוקים מראיית עדות בשולו: *And further on, Alphabet 188*: ועבר השנה ונעשה י"ג חדש מארץ קדושתו: דיגם לחקור... אף לשור ולעיין בתקופת השמש שנה בשנה בסבור ובהלך ובשווי שנתיו בשנות עדות מציאת האביב אולי יבינו כלום כדוק ונבינת דעתם ודעתך: השמש יען כי הוא פעמים בא בקצדה ופעמים בארובה: ... שכן דרך ארצנו כפי משכילי י"ע אשר הודיעו בספריהם ודקדקו בארצך

ונלך אף בשנות שנים פשוטות ואחת מעוברת בשנות התקופה שדברנו, *Ibid.*, 76b-c, Alphabet 188: לעשות מעדים שנים בשנת המעוברת מתקופות ערובה ומשובה: ולאחת פשוטה אחת מעוברת לא נלך לעבר. בי בשנת הרחוקת האומות מפסח ריבונין אי השנה נעבר: ונעשה שנים שנים בחבור לחבר: ובאחרית ערד נעשה בהגדת דעתנו לנו מתגבר: .. זו דרך המסתקפים, מעקר הדבור רחוקים: עד יודע להם עקרים מדוקדקים. כי לא ידעו ברור רחוקים: כי כמו שהירח מסופק, פעמים בל' ופעמים בל"א, כן השמש מסופק, פעם שנתו י"ב ופעם י"ג לחוקקים: ואי ישורו בעדות העדים המחוקקים בהרגשה ותגברת בראי מצדקים: לכן ראוי לנו לדקדק: *And again, 76d-77a, Alphabet 190*: והי' הוא האלהים הטולח בשגנותיך על האביב בארצנו אולי בנין ונתקן כלום בגלותנו: וכספק ה' הטולח בשגנותיך: ביאור זה ביארנו שגלך על שנים השנים הפשוטות ואחת מעוברת: ובשנת הרחוקת פסח אומות מריבונין היא המעוברת. שכן דרך ארצך בוקדוק משכיליך: גם בלל ימות המקורשים של שנה היא נקדש שנים שנים. עד אשר נדררש *(Ribōnin, meaning "the feuding [party],")* ובנין דרך ארצנו בעדים נאמנים בשמיעת אונים נקצור עמר בארצך [*party*],” was a widespread pun on *rabbanim*. Cf., e.g., above, 263, note 35.)

¹⁰³ Cf. above, 272, 280.

¹⁰⁴ See Krauss, *Studien zur byz.-jüd. Geschichte*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, 280, note 78, the quotation from Yahya of Anioch.

whenever it preceded Easter.¹⁰⁶ At any rate, Hadassi's remark, unique in its terminology, indicates that the date of Easter (*pesah ummoth*) carried significant weight in the calendary considerations of the Byzantine Karaites. It affected their proclamations of leap-years and the eventual postponement of the Karaite Passover till the next month.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the suggested, more or less mechanical, pattern of regular and intercalated calendar-years, a Rabbanite-modeled expansion of the festivals proper was also proposed to include the time which might possibly (though not necessarily) belong to the legal duration of the holiday. Thus, Hadassi impressed upon his flock that as long as clear-cut instructions from Palestine fail to be forthcoming, *two* festive days (instead of the prescribed one) should be observed for the holidays falling on "doubtful" years.¹⁰⁸ All these deviations from the original system notwithstanding, Hadassi was still clinging to the old fiction of Palestinian supremacy in Karaite calendation:

Such is the path we shall tread in years like these [he solemnly declares], for this is what we learned from those arriving from the Holy Land.¹⁰⁹

FAILURE OF THE "ABIB" SYSTEM

It was not before the second half of the thirteenth century that the discontinuance of the *abib* mode of calendation in Byzantium was openly admitted. For, in spite of repeated attempts to revive the Palestinian center, the Karaite settlement in Jerusalem after Ṣalāh-ad-Dīn's reconquest of the city in 1187 remained pitifully insignificant.¹¹⁰ Bolstered by two centuries of Karaite adjustment to Rabbinic ways on Byzantine soil, and assisted by the Byzantine Karaites' "new look" at the Talmud (also expressed fully for the first time in the thirteenth century), Byzantine

¹⁰⁶ This is, anyway, what Procopius of Caesarea relates for the period of Justinian the Great, in his *Anecdota or Secret History*, Ch. XXVIII, 16–18. See the Greek text and the English translation of H. B. Dewing, in Vol. VI of the Loeb Classics edition of Procopius, 332 ff. Cf. J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain*, I, 282 f. and 356 f.; Krauss, *op. cit.*, 56 f.; Baron, *The Jewish Community*, I, 230, and *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed.), III, 11; M. Avi-Yonah, *Bi-Ymē Rōmā u-Byzantion*, 181. Whether Justinian's decree was still (or ever) actually enforced on the Jews of the Empire is not for us to answer here.

¹⁰⁷ On the no less pronounced consciousness of Christian-Karaite similarity with regard to the date of Shabū'oth (Pentecost), see above, 278 f., and the notes thereto.

¹⁰⁸ See above, 338, note 102: גם כלל ימות המקודשים של שנה ההיא נקדש שנים שנים.

¹⁰⁹ *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76–c, Alphabet 188: בדרך זו נלך בשנים כאלה כי בן גודע לנו: מהבאים מארץ קדושתך.

¹¹⁰ See Mann's "Summary of the Data Concerning the Karaite Settlement in Jerusalem Subsequent to the Crusades," *Texts and Studies*, II, 120 ff.

Karaism officially sanctioned the Rabbanite (precalculated) nineteen-year cycle of intercalation. Even then, this act was presented as an involuntary compromise with realities of exilic life and a sorry sign of a sinful generation. It could therefore be valid only in the Diaspora.

Now, those of our brethren [states the thirteenth-century Aaron ben Joseph the Elder] who live these days in Ereṣ Yisrael follow the custom of our holy fathers who used to determine [intercalation] according to the [ripening of] *abib* there. Alas, our many sins have caused us, who live outside the [Holy] Land, to follow the reform of the nineteen-year lunar cycle introduced by the Rabbanites. According to that reform, the third, the sixth, the eighth, the eleventh, the fourteenth, the seventeenth and the nineteenth years of the cycle are subject to intercalation. When our sages, blessed be their memory, realized that most of these Rabbanite-computed intercalations are correct, they authorized us to adopt the pattern.¹¹¹

By the middle of the fourteenth century the *abib* question has undergone, so to speak, a full hundred-and-eighty degree turn: the familiar pattern of Karaite-Rabbanite conflicts over intercalation gave way now to a conspicuous discrepancy in the matter within the Karaite world itself. Thus, Aaron ben Elijah reported for the year 1336 C.E. a full one-month difference between the calendar of the Karaites in Constantinople (who, without exception, followed now the Rabbanite cycle) and the calendar of their brethren in Palestine, “the seekers of *abib*.”¹¹² A

¹¹¹ Cf. *Mibḥar* on Exodus, 15b: היום מן אחינו הקראים שהם בארץ ישראל נורמים כמנהג אבותינו: וקדושים שהיו עושים על פי האביב בארץ ישראל. ובעונות הרבים אנחנו הררים בחוצה לארץ הולכים אחר תקון הרבנים שתקנו מחזור לבנה י"ט שנים. ותקנו ג' ר' ח' י"א י"ד י"ז י"ט, וכאשר השכילו חבמינו ז"ל האנחנו בעונותינו הרבים נתרחקנו מארץ הקדושה ואין ידינו: משגת במציאת האביב הכרחנו להמשיך אחרי חשבון העבור כפי מה שטושים אחינו בעלי הקבלה מפני שזה החשבון נמשך אחר מציאת האביב בארץ ישראל בקרוב כי כשאין דעת הברור צריך ללכת אחרי דרך ההקרה. Cf. there also his earlier statements to this effect, Ch. XXXIV, 33a, Ch. XXXVI, 34a.

¹¹² Cf. the story in Aaron's *Gan 'Eden*, 22b: והנה בזמננו במחזור רס"ט שמענו כי בשנה הרביעית מהמחזור מה שהיה לנו חדש אלול היה לאנשי ארץ ישראל מבקשי האביב חדש תשרי. The event was retold from Aaron's Code by Elijah Bashyachi, *Addereth*, 36b, as evidence that, in spite of possible errors, such as the one just cited and one that happened in Bashyachi's own time (see next note), the Rabbanite cycle was reliable.

Incidentally, though both Aaron ben Elijah and Bashyachi follow in their codes the traditional *Karaite* pattern of counting the holidays from *Nisan*, their stress on the discrepancy involving *Tishri* (i.e., the first month of the *Rabbanite* calendar-year), rather than *Nisan*, is not without significance. It stands out distinctly against the pre-Crusade accounts. Thus, to cite the eleventh-century Genizah epistle discussed above, 329, it was *Nisan* that had to be postponed due to the late ripening of *abib* in Palestine. The reverse and more drastic case, reported by Levi ben Yefeth and quoted above, 326, note 66, again directly involved the month of *Nisan*. The unexpectedly early ripening of the *abib*, we recall, caused then the Karaite leaders to cancel the Purim Festival and to proclaim that the day which was thought to be the fourteenth of *Adār* was actually the fourteenth of *Nisan*.

similar occurrence was recorded for the late fifteenth century by Elijah Bashyachi.¹¹³ A Karaite pilgrim to Palestine reported another incident of the same kind in 1641.¹¹⁴ Many more such discrepancies must have naturally occurred in the course of the past six hundred years, but failed to be recorded.

Thus has a great *intra-Karaite* rift on the *abib* issue taken final shape, splitting Karaism asunder according to geographical lines. The Karaites of Palestine as well as those of Egypt and Syria, bordering on the Holy Land, continued to adhere to the original method of observing the state of the spring crop as the only determinant of New Year and intercalation. Special emissaries would be sent out annually to Palestine from the communities of Egypt and Syria for the purpose of collecting the necessary agricultural data.

The Karaite Jews [reports the fourteenth-century Karaite legist Israel Hamma'arabi], the adherents of Scripture, who live close to Palestine—such as the community of Miṣrayim [=Miṣr, i.e., Fustāṭ] and Alexandria, which is [the biblical] Nō Amōn, as well as the communities of Damascus and Aleppo, that is of [the biblical] Ereṣ Ṣōbā

Now, it goes without saying that the post-Crusade calendar variances (this time within the Karaite camp itself) were also due to fluctuations in the date of *Nisan*, fluctuations caused by delayed or advanced ripening of *abib* in Palestine. And yet, significantly, it was now not in *Nisan* but in *Tishri* that a discrepancy, if any, between the Byzantine Karaite community and the sectaries in the East made itself felt and was put on record. This indirectly serves as an additional indicator of the extent to which the Karaite calendar in Byzantium has fallen in line with that of the Rabbanites, as far as intercalation of leap-years was concerned.

¹¹³ *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Ḳodesh*, Ch. XL, 36b: כן הקרה בזמננו שנת הר"מ ט"ו למחזור [1479-80] הלבנו אנשים מקהלתנו בעיר הקדש ואמרו ששנת י"ד ממחזור רע"ז שאנו לנו מזה שנחליש אמונתנו, בי הם [=קראי א"י] הולכים אחרי דעת הברור ואנו הולכים אחרי דעת ההקרבה ואין ראוי לנו מזה שנחליש אמונתנו, בי הם [=קראי א"י] הולכים אחרי דעת הברור ואנו הולכים אחרי דעת ההקרבה ואיש איש על מקומו יבא בשלום והמצות נתנו על פי היכולה ואין ראוי למנוע טוב רב בעבור רע מעט.

¹¹⁴ Cf. the *Itinerary* of Samuel ben David the Karaite of Crimea. Samuel stayed in Constantinople, on his way to Egypt, during the second week of *Tishri*, when his coreligionists in the city were about to celebrate the Feast of Sukkoth. However, on his arrival in Egypt, Samuel observed the same holiday a full month later, "according to the finding of *abib* in the Holy Land." See Samuel's account in H. J. Gurland, *Ginzē Yisrael*, I, 1 f. and 5; A. Yaari, *Masse'oth Ereṣ Yisrael*, 226 and 231.

While in the two instances reported by Aaron ben Elijah and Elijah Bashyachi the Karaites of Palestine and the Near Eastern regions counted a regular year, contrary to those of Byzantium who followed the Rabbanites and considered it a leap-year, the situation was reversed in the case related by the Crimean pilgrim. Obviously, the barley ripened quite late in Palestine in 1641, although the Rabbanite calendar showed a regular year. Hence, the Egyptian Karaites, adhering to the *abib* system, intercalated the year, while the Karaites of Constantinople followed their Rabbanite neighbors. This caused the Turkish Karaites to be one month in advance of their brethren in the Near East insofar as the date of festivals was concerned.

and Arām Naharayim—now, these communities use to send out each year trustworthy envoys to Palestine. The latter search and inquire and investigate and seek out the *abib* in all those localities which have won traditional renown as containing the earliest ripening crops, in advance of all other places. And the moment ripe barley is found, they take along two bunches of the sheaves of [ripened] barley and bring back this [concrete] proof of *abib* to their respective communities and show them the matured crop, whereupon the Karaite population celebrates the Passover. Now, these envoys return to the above communities not later than the tenth of *Nisan*.¹¹⁵

The Karaite testimony is corroborated as late as 1488 C.E. (i.e., the time corresponding to the last years of Elijah Bashyachi) by the objective and trustworthy account of a Rabbanite leader.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Cf. Israel Hamma'arabī's *Seder 'Inyan ha-'Ibbūr* (composed in the first quarter of the fourteenth century), as quoted by P. F. Frankl, "Karäische Studien (Nachtrag)," *MGWJ*, XXV (1876), 328 ff., esp. 329 f.; also in Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 107a, No. 21: אביל ישראל הקראים בעלי המקרא היושבים קרוב לארץ ישראל, הקהל של מצרים ושל אסכנדריא, הוא נא אמון, והקהל של דמשק ושל חלפ, שהם ארם צובה וארם גהרים, אלו הקהלות בבל שנה ושנה שולחים אנשים נאמנים לארץ ישראל, ומבקשים ודורשים וחוקרים ומחפשים אותו [=את האביב] בכל המקומות הידועים בקבלה כי שם ימצא קורם מבל המקומות, ואם ימצא אחד כי נתבשל לוקחים כמו שני עומרים מן שבלי השעורים ומביאים להם עדות האביב ומראים להם האביב ועושים פסח, ועד עשרה בניסן מגיעים אלו השלוחים לכל אלו הקהלות.

The same was reported a hundred and fifty years later by Elijah Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Ḳiddūsh ha-Hodesh*, Ch. XXXIV, 32c: על פי מציאת האביב בארץ ישראל . . . כמו שעושים היום אחינו הקראים הנמצאים בארץ ישראל ובארץ מצרים וארם גהרים וארם צובה.

A testimony to the same effect reaches us from Egypt itself through the early fifteenth-century Samuel al-Maghribī, the author of the *Murshid* (see on him briefly, Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 81 f.). Obviously speaking on the basis of personal experience (he lived in Cairo and there he composed his code in 1434), Samuel states that only the people of Damascus and Cairo are under the obligation to follow the *abib*. The distant communities, however, should fix their New Year according to the nineteen-year cycle. Cf. the Arabic text in *Traktat über Neulichtbeobachtung und den Jahresbeginn bei den Karäern von Samuel ben Moses* (ed. F. Kauffmann), 16; German tr., 26.

¹¹⁶ Cf. the well-known letter of 'Obadyah of Bertinoro, published first by Neubauer, "Zwei Briefe Obadjah's aus Bartenoro," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Juden*, III (1863), 195 ff., esp. 207; reproduced in Lunz's *Hamme'ammer*, III (1919), 117, and in A. Yaari's *Iggeroth Ereš Yisrael*, 119: הם [=קראי מצרים] שולחים בירושלים בכל שנה: לראות האביב, וכפי אשר יראה שם שתהיה השנה צריכה עבור ככה יעברוהו. ואם יעברו השנה הקראים שבמצרים, על דרך משל, והקראים שבקונסטנטינופול לא יעברוהו אין בזה אשם.

See also our earlier references to 'Obadyah's letter, above, 154, note 269, 162, note 292.

In view of this impartial Rabbanite testimony from the late fifteenth century, Assaf's qualified acceptance of the statement by the early fourteenth-century Karaite, Israel Hamma'arabī (see last note), does not seem warranted, esp. since Assaf himself recalls in a footnote (*Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 45, note 21) the epistle of 'Obadyah. Assaf's remark there (107a, No. 21) that the situation described by Hamma'arabī "fits also—and, perhaps, particularly—into the period under review [in Vol. II of *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*]," i.e., preceding the Crusades, fails to take into account Hamma'arabī's earlier report that the *maskillim* (meaning the Karaites) of most communities have already forsaken the *abib* system in favor of the precalculated Rabbanite cycle pattern: ע"כ תרח משבילי רוב ישראל כי טוב ללכת על דרך חשבון עבור של מחזור. This situation,

This stubborn effort of perpetuating the unwieldy, obsolete method of Palestino-centric calendation was, then, limited to the Near Eastern Karaite groups alone. The Karaites of Byzantium, however, and (later) those of the Turkish-conquered former Byzantine lands as well as of the East European communities, deviated ever more from their ancient system and followed the calendary practice of their Rabbanite neighbors.

True, in one area—that of the *kethubboth*—the forces of inherent conservatism were still at work and insisted on viewing the new situation as a passing phenomenon only. The modern formula of the Karaite marriage contract, printed in the East European Karaite prayerbooks, shows only a qualified acceptance of the Rabbanite system of calendation. Thus, never was the original obligation of the newlywed couple to adhere to the *abib* principle cancelled formally. It was only modified to read that bridegroom and bride will sanctify the holidays following a calendar which was based on the "observation of the New Moon and the finding of *abib* in the Holy Land, if they can find it."¹¹⁷

Yet, even this fiction could not reverse the inevitable trend of events. In the long run the *abib* principle could not fare better than the other premises of Karaite legislation which, as we recall, had to be thrown overboard by force of changed circumstances. Much like the original anti-Talmudism, the nominal *raison d'être* of sectarian ideology, which gave way already in the thirteenth century to the paradoxical claim that, after all, "most of the sayings of the Mishnah and the Talmud stem from our [Karaite] Fathers"¹¹⁸—the initial Karaite hostility to the

with the exception of Babylonia (see above, 303 ff.), was definitely the result of disintegration of ties with Palestine in the wake of the Crusades. Thus, it fits into the period of Hamma'arabi rather than into the eleventh century.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Seder Tefilloth haq-Ḳara'im*, ed. Gozlow, IV, 39b–40a (reprinted by Gaster, "Die Ketubbah bei den Samaritanern," *MGWJ*, LIV [1910], 578 f.), and ed. Vienna, IV, 67 (the reference given by Gulak on reprinting the formula in his *Oṣar hash-Shefaroth*, 58, No. 54, and copied from there in *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 107a, No. 20, should be corrected accordingly!): ועוד רצו והתנו שניהם במבחר לבם בברית הר סיני ובחקי: הר חרב לשמור את מועדי יריי המקדשים בראית הירח ובמצאת האביב בארץ ישראל אם ידם משגת בבקשת האביב ולא נשלה זאת המצוה מעלינו, ע"ב מי שירו משגת במציאתו ד"ל בזמן הגלות מחוייב לקדש הזמנים על פי האביב אך אם אין ידם משגת במציאתו ר"ל הרחוקים מארץ ישראל הולכים ע"ד [=על דרך] הקרבה. See also the same wording in the (later) text of Bashyachi, quoted above, 340, note 111.

The clause *ידם משגת במציאתו* goes back, I believe, to the conservative formulation of Aaron ben Elijah, *Gan 'Eden*, 21d, who insisted on the fiction of preserving the obligation of the quest for *abib* "as long as physically feasible": ואולם אנהנו בגלות מצויים: "מחוייב לקדש הזמנים על פי האביב אך אם אין ידם משגת במציאתו ר"ל הרחוקים מארץ ישראל הולכים ע"ד [=על דרך] הקרבה. See also the same wording in the (later) text of Bashyachi, quoted above, 340, note 111.

¹¹⁸ See the quotations above, 241 f., notes 79, 82.

the act of sighting the New Moon fared therefore in Byzantium quite differently than the territorially exclusive, Palestino-centric mode of intercalating years. In the first place, it did not lose its validity with the Crusades. The contrary rather is true. With the gradual diminution and ultimate discontinuance of the *abib* method in the Byzantine Karaite calendar, the importance of lunar observation—the only remaining time determinant on which Karaites and Rabbanites were still divided—increased considerably.

This reverse process can well be illustrated by the literary phenomenon emphasized already at the outset of our calendar discussion. Byzantine Karaite literature from the twelfth century on did not preserve a single explicit recollection of a Karaite-Rabbanite feud over intercalation, although, we have seen, feuds of this kind did take place before the Crusades.¹²² The late texts do, however, refer to several cases of interdenominational conflicts resulting from Karaite insistence on lunar observation. This can be explained only by assuming that Karaite scholars quite naturally chose to remember only those incidents, past and present, which were based on a principle still at work in the Karaite society of their time. They preferred to ignore rather past conflicts which were rooted in a principle that had long since lost its validity. For, surely, the recalling of such instances would merely bring into sharper relief the abandonment by later Karaism of the sect's original system of intercalation.

A comparable situation can be observed also at the other end of the Mediterranean. This situation was indirectly reported by Yehūdāh Hallevī for twelfth-century Spain. Decrying the hypocrisy of Karaite tactics in calendar disputes which he may have observed personally in the Iberian Peninsula, Hallevī challenges the sectaries to explain their behavior:

For, [on the one hand,] I see them [i.e., the Karaites] follow the Rabbanites in intercalating [leap-years] through the addition of a *Second Adār* to [the regular month of] *Adār*, and, at the same time, they taunt the Rabbanites about lunar observation of the month of *Tishri*. "How could you observe the Fast of Atonement [*Kippūr*] on the ninth of *Tishri*?", they ask. Why, they should be ashamed of themselves! [How dare they reproach us for an illusory difference of a day, while] they themselves are in the dark as to whether that very month is *Elūl* or *Tishri*, in case of intercalation, or whether it is *Tishri* or *Marḥeshwān*, if they do not intercalate the year!¹²³

Now, there is no certainty that, similar to their Byzantine brethren, the Spanish Karaites did forego the *abib* practice only at the end of the

¹²² See above, 327 ff.

¹²³ Cf. Hallevī's *Kūzari* in Ibn Tibbōn's version, Part I, end of § 38: רמי יתן וישמיעוני [הקראים]—referring to his earlier query in § 35 with regard to

eleventh or in the early twelfth century under the pressure of international developments. They may have followed even earlier the example of the Babylonian sectaries and adopted Rabbanite computation,¹²⁴ although the persistent memory in Spain, all through the twelfth century, of close contacts with Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah and his school in eleventh-century Palestine militates against such an assumption.¹²⁵ Be that as it may, the vivid picture drawn by Hallevi of the Karaites' insistence on lunar observation, at the very time when, cut off from Palestine, they had to resign themselves to borrowing the Rabbanite method of intercalation, is highly illuminating. It is characteristic of the especially perplexed position of Western Karaism during and after the Crusades, a position shared by the sectaries in Byzantium and in Spain alike.

VICISSITUDES OF LUNAR OBSERVATION

A difference between the precalculated *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* (first day of the month) and the actual witnessing of the New Moon could result in a discrepancy of a full day. Thus, the Rabbanites could be celebrating, say, the first of *Tishri* (New Year) on one day, while the Karaites considered that day a weekday, notwithstanding the prayer and singing issuing from Rabbanite synagogues. An occurrence of this sort is indeed

Ex. 12:2—ואני רואה אתם הולכים אחרי הרבנים בעבור אדר באדר והם מקשים להם בראיית ירח תשרי איך צמתם צום בפור בתשעה בתשרי. הלא יבושו והם אינם יודעים אם החדש הווא אלול או תשרי בשיעברו או אם הוא תשרי או מרחשון בשאינן מעברין. והלא היו אומרים אהנו הטובעים ומה נפחד מהבלילה, אהנו לא נדע אם החדש תשרי או מרחשון או אלול ואיך נקשה למי שאנו הולכים בעקבותיהם ונלמוד מהם התצוו בתשיעי או בעשור לחדש.

The passage was for the first time correctly related to the changing process of the Karaite calendary system by H. J. Bornstein, in a note *ad loc.* The note was printed anonymously in the Warsaw edition of the *Kūzari* by A. Zifrinowitsch (1911), 173 f. (republished: A. Zifroni, Tel-Aviv [1948], 180 ff., note), and, later, in Bornstein's "Recent History of Intercalation" (Hebrew), *Hattekūfah*, XIV-XV (1922), 368 f., note 2.

¹²⁴ See above, 303 ff.

¹²⁵ This memory must have communicated itself even to the local Rabbanites, so much so that an Abraham ibn Daūd would erroneously attribute the very establishment of Karaism in Spain to a disciple of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah. See on it my "Elijah Bashyachi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), esp. 190 ff., where this pseudo-historical reconstruction is refuted. Cf. also above, 34 f. (and notes). Yeshū'ah's own books were apparently so popular in Spain, even among the Rabbanites, that the self-same Ibn Daūd could not help entering a debate with the concepts set out therein. In fact, he wrote a special book of refutation of Yeshū'ah's Commentary on Genesis. Cf. *Seder haq-Qabbalah*, in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 81. See also my comments in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 190, note 84.

The tremendous popularity in twelfth- and, undoubtedly, also in eleventh-century Spain of the biblical commentaries of Yefeth ben 'Ali, the tenth-century Palestinian Karaite exegete who enjoyed great esteem in Byzantium, must similarly be considered in this connection. It strengthens the assumption that all through the tenth and eleventh centuries Spanish Karaism followed the lead of the Palestinian center.

reported by a fourteenth-century Karaite writer (on the basis of older texts)¹²⁶ for the year 1097—a memorable year in the reign of Emperor Alexios I, when the Crusaders (called in our text *Ashkenazim*, i.e., “Germans”) reached Constantinople.¹²⁷

A reverse occurrence, so goes another report by the same scholar (also based on an earlier work),¹²⁸ happened on the first day of *Nisan*, when the Karaites sighted the New Moon a day earlier than predicted by the Rabbanite calendar. This involved the problem of removal of leavened bread from Karaite homes on what appeared to the Rabbanites the eve of the thirteenth, instead of the prescribed fourteenth, day of *Nisan*. Nevertheless, the source assures us, several pious Rabbanites joined the sectarians in the ceremonial of *bi'ūr ḥameš* (i.e., removal of leaven). Again, a memorable year it was, for one Shemaryah Alexandros arrived at that time in Constantinople, possibly as the emissary of the Egyptian Karaite community.¹²⁹

Additional conflicts are cited for the thirteenth and later centuries. Since, however, unlike the *abib* problem, the story does not close with Byzantium, we cannot transgress the chronological limits of this study by including also the later incidents. Suffice it to say here that, in the long run, the principle of lunar observation was to admit defeat no less than the Palestino-centric method of intercalation. Indeed, its abandonment, too, was to be curiously explained away later as a singular success of Karaite jurisprudence.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Aaron ben Elijah, in *Gan 'Eden*, 8d: אך מן משנילי הקראים ספרו בספריהם. Unfortunately, the original source is unavailable.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*: שהקרה זמן ונראה הירח בבקר במזרח ר"ל הישן והרבנים היו מתפללים ומירות של יום תרועה זה היה בקושינא בזמן אלקשיא המלך בזמן שבאו אשכנזים בקושינא. See also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 43, and note 83.

To the references given there by Mann for the term *Ashkenazim*, in the meaning of “Crusaders,” add now line 24 of the Arabic Genizah document published by S. D. Goitein, “New Sources on the Fate of the Jews During the Crusaders' Conquest of Jerusalem” (Hebrew), *Zion*, XVII (1952), 137, Hebrew translation, 141. Cf. also the English version of the document, in Goitein's “Contemporary Letters on the Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders,” *JJS*, III (1952), 172.

¹²⁸ *Gan 'Eden*, 8d: והכותב זה הענין ספר. This source is likewise lost.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*: אך בזמן אחר סיפר ע"י עדים באמנים שנראתה הלבנה וקדשו הקראים ויום קביעת הרבנים היה למחר זה היה בזמן שבא ר' שמריא אלבנדרוס בקושינא והכותב זה הענין ספר שאנשים מן הרבנים תששו עשו עור המזן בעקבות הקראים. See above, 272 and note 58, for a possible Rabbanite echo of the incident. For a tentative identification of Shemaryah of Alexandria see Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 43. Starr (*Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 209) draws attention, however, to the fact that the contiguity of the two reports in Aaron ben Elijah's Code does not necessarily imply that the two events were contemporaneous.

¹³⁰ See on it Poznański, *Die karäische Literatur der letzten dreissig Jahre*, 7 f., in connection with *Ṣemaḥ Dawid*, composed by David Kukizow in 1848 (printed in

Some memorable events of general import have been mentioned, we recall, in the above-cited texts in conjunction with the dates on which the Karaite-Rabbanite feuds over *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* had taken place in Constantinople. This inclusion of references to extraneous happenings which were otherwise unrelated to the subject-matter at hand is quite instructive. It possibly entitles us to infer the reason for the lucky preservation of the described calendar incidents. These early incidents persisted in the memory of the community not because they had no peer or because of their intrinsic importance over and above other (unrecorded) instances of the same kind. Rather, their preservation was due to their mere coinciding with events of a broader scope which left a deep imprint on the memories of those generations. Hence, it may be said with the greatest degree of probability that many more conflicts over lunar observation had taken place in the early stages of Byzantine Karaite history which are covered by this volume; they simply failed to get recorded.

RABBANITE ARGUMENTS

These calendar discrepancies of one day were, by the simple law of averages, undoubtedly more frequent, yet no less irritating, than the differences in intercalation. No wonder, then, that Tobias ben Eliezer, the Byzantine Rabbanite leader of the time of the First Crusade, turned against them with particular vehemence. True, he, too, could not deny that lunar observation was in itself commendable.¹³¹ Even so, he hastened to summon historical and juridical reasons in support of the Rabbinic way.

The lunar observation method [argues Tobias] is not only often impractical;¹³² it actually was *never* binding.

And if you should ask, "How could the Late Sages [*Aḥarōnim*] impose a reform based on [precalculated] postponements [*deḥiyyoth*] of *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* over and above the procedure of the Early Sages [*Rishōnim*] who sanctified the beginning of the month according to lunar observation?"—here is the solution: The Torah said, "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations" (Lev. 23:2). This means that proclamation of holidays depends on the Jewish *people*. Indeed, even in the days of the Prophets, Jews did not follow any other method but the sanctification of *Rōsh-Ḥodesh* by court decision. For it is written, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (Ex. 12:2), which is to say, 'Look at [the pattern of] it and sanctify it accordingly'. This means [in other words] that the matter does

1897). See also A. S. Halkin, "History of the 'Blessing of the New Moon' in the Karaite Congregation" (Hebrew), *Horeb*, II (1935), 87 ff.

¹³¹ *Lekaḥ Tōb* on Genesis, 78 [39b]: מצוה היא לישראל לקדש ע"פ הראייה

¹³² *Ibid.*: אע"פ שמצוה לקדש ע"פ הראייה אם לא נראה מקדשין אותו על הידועה.

not depend on *sighting* the moon but on *sanctification* by court decision [*kiddūsh bēth dīn*].¹³³

The truth of the matter is [declares Tobias, following the midrash in *Pirḳē de-Rabbī Eli‘ezer*] that precalculated calendation is a tradition going back to the remotest past of Jewry and mankind—indeed, it reaches back into the times of Adam himself.¹³⁴ But, granted even, for the sake of argument, that the fixed calendar was an innovation of later Rabbanite reformers; these reformers worked on firm ground. They were fully empowered to proceed with their modifications both by historical precedent and owing to the lofty ideal they were serving. For, in the first place,

such is the way of the world: Each generation raises its own leader [to meet its needs and challenges as they come along]. As long as these [leaders] serve God, they all are equally entitled to be called God’s subjects.

Truly, no single generation is capable of legislating for the good of all generations. But in each generation the leaders of Israel inform the People of God which is God’s Way, and they introduce reforms and innovations and add to the doctrines of the Early Sages, according to the [correct] way of worshipping our God.¹³⁵

Secondly, a precalculated (hence, uniform) calendar is most vital for keeping the nation together. After all, *the unity of Israel is at stake*. More than once Tobias fulminates in his midrashic commentary against splitting the Congregation of Jacob into “feuding groups, where one group approves and the other repudiates the same thing, one celebrates the holy feast today and the other proclaims its date tomorrow.”¹³⁶

These [precalculated] postponements [in the Rabbinic calendar] are a regulation [*takḳannah*] of Jewry introduced into all branches of Jewish Dispersion with the intention

¹³³ *Ibid.*: [ואם תאמר] היאך תקנו אחרונים תיקון הדחיות על תיקון הראשונים שהיו מקדשים עמי: וראייתו... זו חשובתו, כי התורה אמרה אלה מועדי ה' אשר תקראו אותם מקראי קדש (ויקרא כ"ב ב), קריאת קידוש המועדים בישראל חלום, שאפילו בימי הנביאים לא היו ישראל חולכים אלא אחר קידוש בית דין, שנאמר החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים (שמי י"ב ב), כזה ראה וקדש, שאין הדבר תלוי בראיית הלבנה כי אם בקידוש בית דין. The source of Tobias' homily is Bab. Tal. *Rōsh hash-Shanah*, 20a.

¹³⁴ See above, 270 and note 53, for Tobias' thesis.

¹³⁵ *Lekah Tōb* on Genesis, 78 [39b]: וכולן המשרתים את: והיו בדרור זה בדרור, ואין דור אחד יכול לתקן כל הדורות אלא בכל דור דור שדי ישראל מודיעין אלהינו באמת נקראים עבדי, והיו דור אחד יכול לתקן כל הדורות אלא בכל דור דור שדי ישראל מודיעין אלהינו למען ה' דרך ה' ומתקנין ומחדשין ומוסיפין על הראשונים על דרך עבודת אלהינו.

(The English translation of the first sentence, as given here, is not literal; but, I believe, it reflects faithfully the intention of Tobias ben Eliezer.)

¹³⁶ *Lekah Tōb* on Deuteronomy, 125 [63a]: קחלה יעקב (דב' ל"ג ד), שתהיו עשויין אגודה, וכן הוא אומר לא תגודרו (דב' י"ד א), לא תעשו אגודות אגודות, זה אוסר אחת ולא תעשו אגודות אגודות, וזה אוסר לא תגודרו (דב' י"ד א), לא תעשו אגודות אגודות, זה אוסר יחד שבטי ישראל (דב' ל"ג ה), שתהיו עשויין אגודה אחת ולא תהיו עשויין אגודות אגודות.

See also earlier in the same section of the Commentary, 43 [22a]: לא תגודרו (דב' י"ד א), לא בענין גוד אילנא (דניאל ד' יא) אלא מלשון גודר, לא תעשו אגודות אגודות שיהו אלו מוטלין ואלו מכשירין, אלו שומדין מקרא קדש היום ואלו למחר, אלא היו כלכם אגודה אחת כענין שנאמר (עמוס ט' ו) והגודתו על ארץ יסדה.

that all—the *whole* People of God—shall [with its aid] observe the proclamation of festivals on one and the same day. This will prevent them from disintegrating into factions, where one faction [observes the holiday] today, while the other [postpones it until] tomorrow.¹³⁷

Even in the heat of controversy the Karaites could not remain unmindful of this genuine desire for unity and of the impact that such arguments had on the rank and file of diasporic Jewry.¹³⁸ Thus, the Karaites' persistent defense of their unwieldy calendar system was now doubly difficult.

INHERENT WEAKNESS

The precise nature of Rabbanite *action* against Karaite defiance in the field of calendation, apart from literary polemics, is not clear. Pu-

¹³⁷ Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭöb* on Genesis, 78 [39b]: אלו הדחיות חקנת ישראל הם בכל גליות ישראל: ולא להיותם אגודות אגודות, זה היום חח למחר להיות שומרים קריאת מועדים כולם כיום אחד כל עם ה'. ולא להיותם אגודות אגודות, זה היום חח למחר. The same goes for the precalculated intercalation. Cf. *Leḳaḥ Ṭöb* on Exodus, 54 f. [27b]: ולכן ראוי לסמוך על סוד העיבור ולא לעשות ישראל אגודות אגודות להיות זה מחלל שמירת יום: קדש של זה ולאכול ביום עיני של זה.

It is interesting to note that Tobias ben Eliezer's appeal for unity in the field of calendation resembles very much the phraseology employed in the ninth century by the already-quoted Babylonian exilarch. Cf. the text edited by Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 41 f. (also Bornstein, "Recent History of Intercalation" [Hebrew], *Haṭteḳūfah*, XIV–XV [1922], 346 f.; and *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 101a, No. 5): דליהוי דלא ליהי ישראל אגודות אגודות: כולן וכל ישראל אגודה אחת בחודשים וכל מועדים. See above, 307, note 37.

¹³⁸ Cf. the Byzantine source *Yehi Me'ōroth*, excerpted by Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. XI, 150 (on Hadassi's authorship thereof see above, 30, note 8, and 52, note 66), which quotes a work on the calendar by the ninth-century Rabbanite Hai ben David: הזנה רב האי ראש הישיבה אמר בספר אשר תקן אותו שיריב על בעלי מקרא ולהחזיק העבור, ואומר כי ר' יצחק בן נפחא עשה העבור ולא עשהו בזרון אלא לקבוץ האומה על דרך אחד. Although the author speaks of 'ibbūr in general, the fixed method of intermittently intercalating the *months* (creating a pattern of 29 and 30 days) is intended here. The method was hailed here as safeguarding the unity of the nation in Dispersion, over and against Karaite insistence on lunar observation. This 'ibbūr of months is denounced by Hadassi as an innovation (והודו הם כי הירח הוא המקדם והעבור חדש ממין קרוב), but the Karaite scholar does not refrain from repeating with Hai ben David that the reason for the innovation was an honest desire for unity of Israel.

Indeed, in his *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, for which *Yehi Me'ōroth* served as a sort of *collecc-tanea*, Hadassi reports Hai's account in his usual rhymed prose (75a, Alphabet 184): שבאחירתו עוד בא יצחק בן נפחא בשאמר רב האי ראש ישיבה: . . . ותקן הדחיות לא בדיו פסח ולא גחץ עצרת ובללם כרצה ואבנה יען להקהיל את ישראל ביום אחד להקריבה: ובטל ערות הירח מצות דגול מרבבה.

The full (Hebrew) text from Hai's treatise on the calendar, paraphrased by Hadassi, was given earlier by Yefeth ben 'Alī in his (Arabic) Commentary on Leviticus. This greatest of Karaite exegetes, whose writings were eagerly translated and excerpted in Byzantium, also acknowledged the fact that the desire for national unity was the propelling power behind the Rabbanite abolition of the lunar method. Cf. the passage excerpted in *Likḳūṭē*, App. XI, 149 f.: שבימי החכמים הראשונים היו ראויין:

nitive measures surely depended on local conditions in each community, on the ratio of Karaite population versus the number of Rabbanites in the same locality, on the attitude of governmental authorities, etc. The partition erected at Péra in order to alleviate recurrent tensions between the warring parties,¹³⁹ and the admission of the Thessalonican Rabbanite Genizah epistle that "a violent enmity developed and great quarrels took place,"¹⁴⁰ point to sporadic eruptions of physical violence.¹⁴¹ On the whole, however, there is no doubt that the feuds were limited to oral and literary argument. It stands to reason that, with the progressive concentration of the Karaites on the principle of lunar ob-

[צ"ל: רואין] בראיית הירח ויושבי עיירות שבראשי ההרים ראוהו בן יום ולקחו מועד ויושבי עיירות שבשדה ראוהו למחרת שלחה ולקחו מועד למחרתם ביום [צ"ל: ביום] ראוהם ועדה ישראל הרבה היו מתאנחים על זה הדבר כשנתעוררו עליהם המועדות אחד מהם היום ואחד למחרת, כמו שראה ר' יצחק נפתא. וזראה [צ"ל: הוא ראה] בחכמתו לחקן דבר שיעמדו כל ערתי ישראל על יום אחד... באגודה אחת ובחבורה אחת... ורצוי לפניו [=לפני הקב"ה] כשיהיה באסיפה אחת ואגודה אחת בלי מחלוקת. Yefeth's contemporary, Sahl ben Maṣṣliāḥ, recognized the same in his oft-quoted Epistle, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. III, 33: חשבון העבור הנתון למען חבור [ר"ל: חבור העם] (cf. note 1, *ad loc.*). So did Yefeth's son, Levi, in his Book of Precepts, *Liḳḳūṭē*, App. X, 89; and, a century earlier, *Ḳirḳisānī*, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 805: *אן יجتمع به الامة*.

Unlike these tenth-to-twelfth-century Karaite scholars, the late ninth-century Daniel al-Ḳūmisī did not seem to be impressed by this Rabbanite invocation of Jewish unity. On the contrary: Precisely in the name of Jewish unity he called on the Rabbanites to revert to the old calendary system. Cf. the passage from his *Pithrōn Shenēm 'Asar* (*ad Mal.* 2:10), as quoted and translated above, 311 f., and end of note 45.

Incidentally, the tradition of Hai ben David, attributing the calendar reform to an Isaac (ben?) Nappaḥā, is in itself a problem. Mann promised a special treatment of the subject (*Texts and Studies*, II, 468, note 1); I am, however, aware of no later discussion by Mann of the question at hand. Cf. his earlier essay on "A Responsum by Sherira Gaon and His Son Hai on the Calendar," forming a part of his "Gaonic Studies," in *HUC Jubilee Volume* (1925), 237 ff. See also Harkavy's Hebrew *Ḥadashim gam Yeshanim*, 2nd Ser., No. 6, § 2, in *Haggoren*, IV (1903), 75 ff., esp. 80; and Bornstein, in his already-quoted Hebrew study in the *Sokolow Jubilee Volume*, 159 f.

As far as I know, the earliest mention of Isaac Nappaḥā in Karaite literature is that by *Ḳirḳisānī* (937 c.e.). Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 23 (Eng. tr., Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 342); I, 143 (French tr., Vajda, *REJ*, CVII [1946-47], 95); IV, 805.

The tomb of a "Rabbi Isaac Nappaḥā," in a Babylonian community which itself bore the name "Nappaḥā," was venerated as late as the twelfth century. This was reported by Benjamin of Tudela, ed. Asher, 66; Eng. tr., 107. The reading of the place-name was accepted, on good grounds, by Grünhut, 61 (and 123, notes 372-73); however, Adler, 43, preferred the variant "Kaphri." Now, the accepted interpretation associates, of course, the "R. Isaac Nappaḥā" of the *Itinerary* with the ancient Palestinian sage going by that name. Should not this interpretation be modified now in the light of the above Karaite texts? It seems quite plausible to connect the veneration of the tomb of Rabbi Isaac of Nappaḥā (read בן מן for מן in Hadassi) with the far-reaching calendary reform which this late Babylonian sage had introduced into Babylonian Jewish life.

¹³⁹ See on it above, 335 f.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. above, 329 and note 76.

¹⁴¹ See above, 55 f., note 75.

degree stereotype. Yet, it no doubt echoes the feelings of many a Karaite in an overwhelmingly Rabbanite community:

They have reduced me, they have chastised me;
At all time they quarrel with me!
Oh, there are among them some mighty ones like bears.
And, after all, I am one and they are so many.
Rescue me, O Lord, from tyrants!
Do save me from the tyrants!

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHALLENGE

IN THE PRECEDING chapters our attention was focused mainly on the *practical* divergences between Byzantine Karaites and Byzantine Rabbanites in matters of ritual and of religious observance. These divergences, we have seen, did inspire, on the one hand, mutual curiosity and borrowing. On the other hand, they bred anger and animosity and were the subject of actual quarrels and feuds.

The *literary* arguments which accompanied these practical differences between the two branches of Judaism in the Empire did not merely provide us with an exhaustive index of the subject-matter under contention. They also permitted us to recapture much of the creative tension underlying the acclimatization of the Karaite movement in Byzantium.

RABBINIC STRATEGY

The available material, as utilized in the foregoing discussion, manifested itself so far in a threefold way:

a) it showed each of the contending sides in the very process of closing the ranks under the impact of sectarian or orthodox assault (as the case may be) and of reasserting itself in its respective position with reference to the legal minutiae of divergent practices;

b) it introduced us to the accusations, complaints and slogans which the feuding parties were wont to toss at each other in this or that instance, and to the sporadic action which may have sometimes accompanied such angry exchanges; and

c) it unfolded before us the variegated pattern of social contacts and relationships embracing both factions of Byzantine Jewry: mutual influences, sometimes bordering on outright indebtedness, and desperate resistance to the recognition of change; inevitable adjustments and stubborn reactions; pathetic efforts, by some, to stem the tide of ever-growing interdenominational rapprochement, and the legalistic acrobatics, by others, to find an acceptable formula sanctioning the fruits of such rapprochement and the adoption of new ways.

We shall now concentrate on the fourth lesson to be drawn from the extant literature, namely, that which, *independent of the practical issues at hand*, reveals to us *the overall strategy of the parties involved and the major lines of their attack and counterattack*. The present chapter will thus trace the *general direction of Rabbinic challenge* to the newly settled sectarian community in Byzantium and the *broader aspects of the Karaite response* to that challenge. Similarly, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the story of *Karaite relations with other non-normative Jewish groups* which existed in the Empire in the late tenth and during the eleventh century.

A few glimpses into Rabbinism's strategy in its struggle against the encroachments of young Karaism on the traditional mode of life of Byzantine Jewry are again afforded by Tobias ben Eliezer's *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb*. The importance of this late eleventh- and early twelfth-century commentary has been amply demonstrated in earlier chapters. The work proved indispensable for the understanding of the practical problems which shaped Karaite-Rabbanite relations in Byzantium in the period under discussion. Now it is also from that work of Tobias that we can deduce the basic line of Rabbanite defense.

That defense was built on cleverly equating the *communal legitimacy of the leadership* with the *historical legitimacy of the religious doctrine* expounded by that leadership. Thus, on the one hand, Tobias ben Eliezer hailed the Mosaic origin and the historical continuity of Rabbinic tradition as such, implying that the venerable genealogy of that *tradition* lent, as it were, automatic recognition to the successive generations of its Rabbanite *exponents* as well. On the other hand, conveniently transposing the terms of equation when speaking of the Karaites, he opened an all-out attack on Karaite *leaders* and their flock, deriding them as intellectual failures and novices on the scene of Jewish history. By discrediting the *Karaites* he expected to discredit automatically *Karaism* as such in the eyes of the average Byzantine Jew.

In pursuing this double-edged line, the great communal leader and spokesman of Rabbinism in Byzantium anticipated by some two generations similar efforts of another local leader confronted with Karaite insurgency.¹ Of course, there is an essential difference in form and content between the Byzantine work in question and the twelfth-century

¹ The resemblance between the arguments of the two leaders, Tobias ben Eliezer of Byzantium and Abraham ibn Daūd of Spain, with regard to Sabbath candles was already pointed out above, 269.

chronicle of the militant Spaniard Abraham ibn Daūd. While Ibn Daūd's *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah* was intended, at the very outset, to serve as a propaganda pamphlet, pure and simple, against Karaism and the Karaites in Spain,² Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* was first and above all a biblical commentary. Conceived as a full-scale midrashic exposition of the Five Books of Moses and the Five Scrolls, it was limited by the thematic and textual boundaries of the scriptural source. Hence, it could indulge in anti-Karaite polemics as far only as the biblical presentation seemed to call for, or permit, a digression of this kind. Notwithstanding this difference in the nature of Tobias' and Ibn Daūd's works, respectively, we encounter in both essentially the same two-pronged procedure: an enthusiastic apologia in favor of normative tradition in general, plus an unbridled attack on the sectaries personally. The latter were decried as incompatible with the native Jewish society and, hence, unworthy of the listeners' attention in doctrinal matters as well.

WAS RABBANITE TRANSMISSION RELIABLE ?

Tobias' point of departure was, then, to restore the confidence of the average Byzantine Jew in the wisdom and correctness of his own (Rabbinic) practices. This confidence had apparently been shaken in the course of the eleventh century by Karaite subversion. Tobias assures his followers that their practices "are a tradition in Israel, generation after generation."³ They were transmitted by the Prophets, eye-witnesses of the Temple ritual, into the hands of "our masters [who] have investigated and expounded the Torah to the highest degree of clarity, [exactly] the way it was handed down from Mount Sinai."⁴

However, from this very point onward it was heavy going for the Rabbanite protagonist. For [so ran the Karaite argument], if the "traditional" Rabbinic practices were really of Mosaic origin, then they

² Cf. the very beginning of the tract, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles* (ed. Neubauer), I, 47: זה סדר הקבלה כתבנוהו להוריע לתלמידים כי כל דברי רבותינו ז"ל חכמי המשנה והתלמוד כולם מקובלים, חכם גדול וצדיק מפי חכם גדול וצדיק, ראש ישיבה וסיעתו מפי ראש ישיבה וסיעתו עד אנשי כנסת הגדולה שקבלו מהנביאים זכר כולם לברכה. ולעולם חכמי התלמוד וכל שכן חכמי המשנה אפילו דבר קטן לא אמרו מלבם תוך מהתקנות שתקנו בהסכמת כולם כדי לעשות סייג לתורה. ואם לחשך אדם שיש בו ריח מינות לומר מפני שנחלקו בכמה מקומות לשיכך אני מסופק בדבריהם, אף אתה הקהה שיש בו ריח מינות. Cf. also the quotations above, 34 f., note 21, 269, note 51.

³ *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 126 [63b]: חכמי ישראל (ש)קבלו מאבותיהם ומרבותיהם דור אחר דור חכם ששמע מרבו ורבו מרבו עד הנביאים תגי זכריה ומלאכי שקבלו מן הנביאים הראשונים שקבלו מן חכמי ישראל. Cf. also *ibid.*, on Exodus, 174 [87a]: שהרי כמה מצות סתומות וכמה משפטים סתומים בתורה שגלום חכמי ישראל בקבלת דור אחר דור, רב מפי רב, ששמע מפי רבו, ורבו מרבו, הלכה למשה מסיני.

⁴ *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 102 [51b]: ורבותינו חקרו ודרשו התורה על בוריה כנתינתה מהר סיני.

should have automatically won the concurrence of the *whole* nation, including the *Karaites*, who most fervently espoused the Mosaic heritage. The Karaite schism would, then, be simply inconceivable. After all, we [the Karaites], are Children of Israel [as much as the Rabbanites are]—exclaims Tobias ben Moses, the Karaite leader from Constantinople, answering Rabbanite polemicists a generation or so prior to the Rabbanite Tobias ben Eliezer.—The Rabbanites were our ancestors; in their fold we grew up; in their communities and synagogues we were raised. . . . Had these [late Rabbinic practices] been known for sure [all along], we could not have hardened our heart and not let any doubt enter it. Now, we are conscious of the sincerity [of the motive] which made us harden our heart in opposition to what they [=the Rabbanites] say. [Moreover,] we are a large community, and [since] we [all] maintain the same [opinion], it is inconceivable that we should be lying to ourselves.⁵

Moreover, if the chain of transmission was legitimate and if the traditions were indeed handed down by the Prophets, how come that, unlike the universally accepted prophetic writings proper, Rabbinic observances were subject to doubt and controversy among the *Rabbanites* themselves? Cleverly focusing their attacks on certain honest differences of opinion in the Talmud or on divergent Rabbanite interpretations of biblical verses, the Karaites pointed to the intra-Rabbanite discussions as proof of the unreliability of Rabbinic tradition.

And as for the Rabbanites [ridicules an anonymous Byzantine Karaite contemporary of Tobias ben Eliezer], who claim, “Verily we have learnt from the Prophets the true exposition of the Torah”—why, then, did they not offer one explanation for this

⁵ Cf. Tobias ben Moses' *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 110b, answering Saadyah's defense of Rabbinic tradition (our English translation is but an abridgment of the fuller Hebrew text published here for the first time): וכבר בארנו במקומות מן הכתבים שלנו בעבור ההעתיקה: וכי הירושה אשר בידי הרבנים לא יתכן להיות ראיה ואבלוגון [ἔβλογον; see above, 288, note 105] וכי הם לו היה האמת כאשר טענו ואמ' היה חוב שיודע לנו ודאי. וידענו כי לא יתכן שתהיה האמה מבוררה בודאי אל הידועה בהתרת האליה ודומ' לה ולו נהיה הודאי כזה היה יהיה לכללה ואנחנו בני יש[ראל] ואבותינו הרבנים ובחיקם נתגדלנו ובמושבותיהם בתרוממנו ושמענו מהם התרת זה וכלל מה שהם דומים לזאת מאש' הם מתחזקים בדתם בהם התר ואסור חייב. ולו היה זה ידוע בודאי לא היה יתכן שנעצור חלבו [צ"ל: בלבנו] ולא יבוא בו לנו ספיקות. וידענו תמימות עצור לבנו חלוק מה שא' [מרן] ואנחנו קבוץ גדול ונגיד על זה ולא יתכן שנהיה בו משקרים עצמינו.

This forceful statement of Tobias ben Moses is unique both in its bluntness and in its line of argumentation. Especially noteworthy is Tobias' stress on *Rabbinism's historical precedence over the Karaite sect*. This very point, indeed, was, to my mind, the reason for the fact that the above passage was let fall into oblivion. Characteristically, while the other argument, to be discussed presently, was and remained always a standard item in Karaism's anti-Rabbanite polemics, the argument advanced here by Tobias was never again repeated in any of the later Byzantine Karaite creations. Tobias' frank admission that “the Rabbanites were our ancestors; in their fold we grew up; in their communities and synagogues we were raised” stood in glaring contradiction to the later (twelfth-century) pseudo-historical slant of the Byzantine Karaite campaign against Rabbinism. This new school presented *Karaism as having preceded the Rabbanite system*. See an illustration of that claim, below, 361 f., and note 17.

particular verse but argued that there were several meanings and numerous interpretations to it? . . . Now, if it were true that the Prophet Elijah was staying among them, or that they were advised by a Divine Voice [in case of doubt], or that they were making their pronouncements on the basis of a tradition which was handed down to them by Prophets—how come they failed to grasp the essence of that verse? Indeed, by means of this verse God has revealed their deceit, so that it be known that all they have stated was the invention of their own mind and not the Word from the mouth of the Lord. . . . For most of what they say is lies.⁶

In the face of such vituperations, the Rabbanite side could not retain for long its academic calm. Impatiently Tobias ben Eliezer reiterates that all Rabbanite observances

stand as a tradition in Israel over which there was no argument among the Jewish sages; and he who does not care for the honor of his Creator and insists on stating perverse things does violence to himself.⁷

THE EVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The regular Rabbanite rejoinder to Karaite jeers concerning the existing legalistic discord within the normative camp was already illustrated above, in connection with the dispute over Sabbath candles. Both Tobias ben Eliezer and Abraham ibn Daūd, we recall, admitted sporadic controversies among the various schools of orthodoxy over matters of details: They argued, however, that whenever basic issues were at stake agreement among Rabbinic scholars was unanimous.⁸

Now, such assertions were strong enough to dispose of Karaite criticism

⁶ Cf. the hitherto unpublished anonymous Commentary on Exodus-Leviticus (see on it above, 245 f., notes 93-94), Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 369a: כי הרבנים אשר יאמרו כי אנחנו מפי הנביאים למדנו פתרון התורה איך לא פתרו זה הפסוק בפתרון אחר [צ"ל: אחר] אלא אמרו כי כמה פנים וכמה פתרונות. . . ואם אליהו היה נמצא עמם ומבט קול היו משתמשין או מן קבלת נביאים היו אומרים, איך לא ידעו עקר זה הפסוק? וי"י גלה תחבולתם בזה הפסוק, להודיע כי בל מה שיאמרו הוא מדעתם לא מפי י"י כי לא יבשר שלא הודיע משה פתרון זה הפסוק לישראל ולא היו יודעים אותו הנביאים. . . להודיע כי רוב דבריהם כזבים.

This argument was, of course, of long standing in the history of Karaite polemic against Rabbinism. Cf., for instance, Kīrkisānī, who, in order to show the falsehood of the Rabbanites' "assertion that they are holders of tradition and that their customs come down directly from prophecy," copied the list of "Differences between the Rabbanites of Palestine (*ash-Shām*) and Babylonia." See above, 220, note 31. Cf., further, Salman ben Yerūham, *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, esp. 44: אם התלמוד מדברי עם נביאים, דברים נחלפים למה בו נמצאים? עתה נודע כי הוא שטות ודברי פתאים בעדות כל הברואים. See also Sahl ben Maṣliāh, in the introductory poems to his oft-quoted Epistle, *Liḳḳūfē*, App. III, 24: ושאל תחלה מהאומרים כי העתיקו בפה תעודה, שהם נפגלים ברוב דבריהם; and again there: אחר כן הלבנת כדבריהם תקנו וקיימו . . . קנץ [=ראיה] העתק מפי נביאים אין שם . . . ואיך היה כן הלבנת כדבריהם תקנו וקיימו . . . והיה כן והם במדרשם זה יאסור זה יתיר בפירושהם כי חכמי המשנה המזהירים בחלפו ונפגלו בהרבה דברים, ולא כן השומעים מפי נביאים ומורים. . . הלילה שיעתיקו כזאת מפי קדושים.

⁷ *Leḳaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 131 [66a]: ומי כל אלה קבלה הן מישראל שלא נחלקו ישראל עליהן, ומי שאינו חס על כבוד קונו ורוצה לדבר תהפוכות הרי הוא חוטם נפשו.

⁸ Cf. above, 268 f. (and notes 51-52).

in Spain, where Rabbanite learning and intellectual activity were high and well developed, while local Karaism failed (or was not given the chance) to attain any appreciable degree of native creativity.⁹ Indeed, when fighting his sectarian compatriots in the twelfth century, Abraham ibn Daūd did not deem it necessary to qualify the trite argument extolling the exclusively Mosaic origin of any and all observances which were sponsored by normative legislation. Save for the unanimously accepted *taḳḳanoth* (= ordinances), promulgated in order "to build a fence around the Torah," Ibn Daūd conceded no evolutionary development or creative reinterpretation of Jewish law. The emphasis remained on tradition as such (*ḳabbalah*)—its antiquity vouchsafing wisdom, its unbroken Chain of Transmission guaranteeing legitimacy and reliability.¹⁰

Evidently, this line of argumentation, while reiterated time and again by Tobias some two generations prior to Ibn Daūd, was not considered sufficient in the Byzantine climate. Here, the stress on the trustworthiness of Rabbinic tradition notwithstanding, Tobias could not help posing and answering in the affirmative the question of the *evolution of Halakhah* as a matter of historico-philosophic principle. Rabbinic legislation [he argued] was the manifestation of the right of each generation to introduce such reforms as may be required at each juncture of history for the sake of effectively coping with novel problems which confront society from time to time.¹¹

⁹ Ibn Daūd's biased summary that "never have the sectaries done anything good for Israel—they have composed neither [legislative] books which contain matter strengthening the Torah nor [philosophical] works of wisdom, nor one single poem, or a single *piyyūt* or a *neḥamah* [=liturgy of national consolation]—for they all are mute dogs that cannot bark" (*Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, I, 81; cf. above, 35, end of note 21) could not have been intended to include Karaite literary activity in the East. After all, Ibn Daūd himself reported the fact that at-Tarās introduced a book of Yeshū'ah into Castille. Moreover, he himself wrote a refutation of one of Yeshū'ah's works. He also could not have ignored the popularity in his country of the exegetical writings of Yefeth ben 'Alī. (See above, 207, note 6, 346, note 125 and below, 365 f., note 23.)

It is obvious, then, that Ibn Daūd's evaluation, bigoted as it was, pointed only to the *absence of native Karaite creativity in Spain*. While even in such limited capacity the verdict of the Rabbanite polemicist of Toledo should be taken with a grain of salt, it could not have been effective if it had been utterly wrong. Whether the paucity of Karaite literary production in Spain was due to the ruthless anti-Karaite policies of Spanish Rabbanite dignitaries (see above, 56, latter part of note 75) cannot be decided here.

¹⁰ Cf., e.g., the quotation above, 356, note 2.

¹¹ Cf. the Tobias text cited above, 349, and note 135, from *Leḳaḥī Tōb* on Genesis, 78 [39b]. The difference between the legislative philosophy expressed by Tobias in that and in other texts and the concept set forth by Ibn Daūd in the passage cited in note 2 (and in other portions of his *Seder haḳ-ḳabbalah*) is so amazing that it merits a separate treatment. At this point, the present brief comments will have to suffice.

Such presentation, to be sure, did not seem to Tobias ben Eliezer incompatible with the traditional claim of the Rabbanites—against Karaite insistence to the contrary!—that the post-Mosaic legislative process in Jewry neither added nor subtracted from the basic legal premises laid down by the Torah.¹² For this process was interpretative rather than one of actual legislation. The Written Word was *a priori* composed in a way that would necessitate constant study and untiring reinterpretation on the part of the people who received this Divine Message in trust. Much like the Chain of Transmission, then, the Chain of Reinterpretation also draws its strength and legitimacy from the historic Lawmaking Act on Mount Sinai.¹³

HALAKHIC EVOLUTION VERSUS ARBITRARY INNOVATIONS

But the best line of defense was—attack. Who were these critics of Rabbinism anyway? What was the basis for their utterances? Where was their literature, their scholarship? On what ground could they approach the observant Jew and suggest that he “ignore the testimony of witnesses, who saw the correct procedure with their own eyes, and, instead, rely on those who relate things which they made up and state, ‘Verily, it was so’!?”¹⁴ The doctrines of the Karaites were an invention, pure and simple, and had no scholarly or traditional basis whatsoever.

Verily I wonder [exclaims Tobias ben Eliezer] at those people who never saw the proceedings of Temple sacrifices. . . , and neither performed them themselves nor studied the books that relate the correct procedure thereof. All they had in mind was to overthrow the Teachings of the Living Lord, the King of the Universe, and to establish their own pronouncements on naught, and claim, “This is what the Tora^h

¹² *Lekah Ṭob* on Exodus, 143 [72a]: וכל ונביאים לא הוסיפו ולא העדיפו ולא פיתחו מן התורה: אשר נתן ה' אלהינו לנו על ידי משה רבינו בל הנביאים וכל. Cf. *ibid.*, on Leviticus, 32 [16b]: החכמים לא הוסיפו ולא גירעו.

¹³ *Ibid.*, on Numbers, 273 [137a]: מלמד שהמצוה (במדב' ל' א). כל אשר צוה ה' את משה והוראה לישראל, אלו הלכות שנאמרו על פה ופירוש המצוה שנתקבלו מפי משה בקבלה. ואם תאמר למה לא נכתבו בפירוש? עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ (קהל' י"ב יב). ולא עוד אלא שנתן הקב"ה תורה שחיה עמל בה יום וילילה, כי אז תצליח את דרכיך ואז תשכיל (יתרשע א' ח) Cf. also *ibid.*, 162 [81a], and on Leviticus, 154 [77b].

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38 [19b]: כי איך יחכן להניח עדים שראו בעיניהם ולסמוך על המגידים מדעתם לאמר כן: היה והלא עמנו מסכת מדות ומסכת חמיד ומסכת מנחות ומסכת מעילה ומסכת תמורה ומסכת ערכין ומסכת זבחים ותיקון הסמיכות והתנופות וההגשות וההקטרות מכהנים גדולים שראו את הנביאים לא רמזו כזו נביאיו וכבר לא ראייתם נביאים ולא רוח הקדש בפיהם כחזונו: איך: (Eshkol hak-Kofer, 86d, Alphabet 225) Possibly to offset this line of argument, Yehūdāh Hadassī heatedly retorted (Eshkol hak-Kofer, 86d, Alphabet 225): קבעתם כזה לדורותינו? הנעזב דברי הנביאים ונחפשו דברי חיצונים כפירושכם אשר לא רמזה תורתנו.

This echoes Saḥl ben Maṣliāḥ's query, in *Likḥūṣē*, App. III, 26 (see above, 358, end of note 6): הכזה ידברו המעתיקים מפי נביאים ומורים? נביא ורואה מקדם נחתם, וספר כל תורה מלפנים — נחתם, וכל העולם תשך ונעתם, ואחרי כמה שנים בתבו משנתם: מי הם החכמים הנוכחים שהעתיקו מפי נביא להורותם? יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו ויגידו באמונתם, ונלך בלגו בדרכיהם ובנתיבותם —

commands." Well, if truly they are wise men, and if indeed the Torah of our God was the way they say it is, why then did they not expound the Torah in the proper fashion, similar to the [Rabbinic] sages of Israel who received [its true meaning] in tradition from their fathers and teachers?!"¹⁵

The truth of the matter is, then [Tobias enlightens his flock], that this is a *new* wave of evildoers, detached from the main course of Jewish history, opposed to the *evolutionary process* of the Jewish philosophy of life and bent on *arbitrary innovations* which have no roots in the Jewish past.

Woe to those who do violence to themselves and utter arrogant words against Him who is the Foundation of the World, and pride themselves so much that they dare change laws and break the Eternal Covenant! Why, our ancestors were present when the Temple was founded in the time of the last Prophets—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—and saw the exact procedure of burnt offerings and meal offerings and trespass offerings and peace offerings and all [other] sacrifices, and the way that procedure was transmitted to them from the hands of the Prophets, so they wrote it down in their teaching as testimony in Israel.

It was only afterwards that a brood of sinful men arose, men who did not know between right and left. They were clever enough to commit evil, but to do good they had no knowledge (Jer. 4:22) . . . They did not rely on the pronouncements of our fathers with regard to what is permitted and what is prohibited, but they wrote down whatever came to their mind and transmitted it [to others] so as *to cause many people to err and stumble*—may just retribution fall on their heads, while we remain clear of guilt!¹⁶

This accusation of being novices in the field of Jewish legislation and scholarship could not pass unanswered. "We preceded them!"—desper-

¹⁵ *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus, 126 [63b]: וחיימה נדולה על אנשים אשר לא דאו תקון הקרבנות וההקרבנות וההגשות ומנחת העומר ומנחת נסכים ומנחת כהן ומנחת גביר ומנחת סוטה ומנחת חריבה ובלולה והיאך היו היציקות והבלילות והקמיצות והתנפוחות ולא נתעסקו בהן ולא כספר תקונייהן ולא היה דעתם כי אם להפוך דברי אלהים חיים ומלך עולם להעמיד דבריהם על תהו ולומר כי כן התורה. ואם חכמים המה ואם תורת אלהינו היתה כמו שאומרים, למה לא דרשו התורה על מתבוננה כדרך חכמי ישראל שקבלו מאבותיהם ומרבניהם דור אחר דור?

(Significantly, all the texts introduced in the present discussion from Tobias' *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* belong to the Leviticus Section of his commentary. This is no mere coincidence. The only two Karaite compositions which were created in Byzantium prior to Tobias ben Eliezer's activity—namely, *Oṣar Neḥmad* of Tobias ben Moses and the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous*—are also devoted to Leviticus. While the anonymous commentator included an exposition of Exodus, too, Tobias ben Moses concentrated on Leviticus. See more on this, below, 432 f.).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38 f. [19b f.]: אוי להם לחומסי נפשם ומדברי על יסוד עולם עתק ויתגאו בעצמם להחליף חוקים ולהפר כרית עולם. ואבותינו היו כומן בית המקדש אשר הוטד בימי נביאים האחרונים חגי זכריה ומלאכי וראו היאך היתה תקון עולה והמנחה והאשם והשלמים וכל הקרבנות. ובאשר קבלו מידי הנביאים כן כתבו כמשנתם לעד כישראל. ואחד י כן קמו תרבות אנשים חטאים שלא ידעו בין ימינם לשמאלם אלא חכמים המה להרע ולהיטיב לא ידעו. . . ולא סמכו על דברי רבותינו לאסור ולהתיר אלא מה שעלה בדעתם כתבו ומסרו להטעות ולהכשיל הרבה עמם. גמולם תבוא כראשם יאבחנו נקיים! The last angry fine provides us indirectly with an admission of the wide range of Karaite success in Byzantium.

Incidentally, the argument that the adversaries were "clever enough to commit evil but to do good they had no knowledge" and that their literature had no value was

ately exclaims the twelfth-century Karaite, Elijah ben Abraham, and settles down to reduce to writing his own concept of the historic process in the course of which Karaism arose in Jewry. However, Elijah's reply and his exposition of Karaite history do not belong anymore to the chronological framework of the present study.¹⁷

NOVICES OR STRANGERS

To be sure, the slogan denouncing the Karaites as novices in doctrinal matters did not originate in Byzantium. One may confidently surmise that it figured prominently in Rabbanite polemics against Karaism from the very inception of the schism, although, true, our earliest *literary* testimony to that effect does not antedate the Saadyan period.¹⁸ Nevertheless, much as the other elements from earlier times discussed in the foregoing chapters, this slogan, too, drifted in Byzantium in a direction undreamed of by its ninth-century initiators.

Since, unlike the Babylonian branch of the sect, Byzantine Karaism did not rise from within the ranks of the native Jewish population but was, literally speaking, "imported" by successive waves of Karaite immigrants from the East, the cry of "novices!" was given in Byzantium a peculiar twist of its own. The "novices" were "strangers," pure and simple. Indeed, from denouncing the Karaites as intruders in the Jewish community of learning to decrying them as complete strangers in the Byzantine society at large was but one step. The resentment of aliens—an instinctive,

a two-way street. Earlier, Tobias ben Moses, the Karaite, invoked the same scriptural verse against his Rabbanite opponents and their literature. Cf. the hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodleian MS No. 290, 27a: שהם [ר"ל: הרבנים] חכמים להרע ולהטיב אינם יודעים . . . ויהי להם גמול רע באש יוקדת כי קבצו מן הלשונות רברים ועשו ספרים ואין בהם הועלה . . .

¹⁷ Cf. *Ḥillūḳ haq-Ḳara'im we ha-Rabbanim*, in Pinsker's *Liḳḳūṣē*, App. XII, 101: זו היא הפתקת רת הקראים אשר בידנו, וראשונים אנחנו מהם, וממנו היו נרמזין ירושלמין אבותנו בני הנאבחים: ושמותין וצרוקין וביתטיין. קישיותיהן מן רברינו נרמזין והנאנקים, וקרמונים אנחנו מאחיבם: See also Poznański's *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiyah*, 72 ff., and especially his Introduction to Sultański's *Zekher Ṣaddiḳim*, 19 ff. Most recently, the Karaites' "appeals to history" have been summarized by Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 254 ff., 406 ff. (notes).

The whole problem of Elijah's concept of Karaite history and its place in Karaite historiography at large will be discussed in my projected continuation volume, which is to deal with Byzantine Karaism in the period of the Crusades.

¹⁸ Cf. Salman ben Yerūḥam's sarcastic answer to Saadyah's claim, *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, 113 (also earlier, in Pinsker, *Liḳḳūṣē*, end of App. II, 19): באמרך בעלי: מקרא חדשים ורבותינו הישנים [= הרבנים] הם קדושים, אם בעלי התועבות האלה וכאלה מקדושים, סיטרא (alluding, of course, to תועבות התלמוד, of which see above, 241, note 78, 259, note 25) והמן חולתו בן פרץ נטושים. Saadyah's original statement has not yet been recovered.

universally known phenomenon—met in the Byzantine Empire with special sensitivity.¹⁹ This xenophobia communicated itself to local Jews no less than to their Gentile neighbors.^{19a}

Truly, Tobias' wording on that point assumes the quality of a hard-hitting immediacy and seems pregnant with meaning. The impression is gained that the accusation of alienage, thrown in the face of Byzantine Karaites, was not merely a manifestation of the fairly natural and passing displeasure which old-timers would entertain towards new, and apparently not unsuccessful, arrivals. Rather, it appears to have been planted deliberately, as a part of a conscious policy through which Rabbanite leadership hoped to discredit the Karaites and their standing in the Byzantine community. In vain should we look for an expression of a similar sentiment in the subsequent arguments of the Arab-educated chronicler of Toledo. Pinning on the Karaites the label of a foreign eastern element carried a special significance in Christian Byzantium only.

Who were these Karaites anyway? "Those fools *who have come* and introduced new doctrines—why, *they have come just recently!*" [exclaims Tobias, paraphrasing Deuteronomy 32 : 17].²⁰ They were different. Theirs was a different culture, a different way of life. They stemmed from a

¹⁹ Cf. the vicissitudes of the Egyptian Jewish visitor to Constantinople, as depicted in the Genizah epistle edited by Starr, "On Nahrai ben Nissim of Fustāṭ" (Hebrew), *Zion*, I (1936), 443; also in Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 199 f., No. 147.

The well-known experiences of Liudprand, the bishop of Cremona and ambassador of Otto I to the court of Nicephor Phocas (*Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, in F. A. Wright's English translation of *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona*), are also a part of this general pattern of Byzantine mistrust of the foreigner. True, while this general attitude was at the root of the unenviable treatment accorded to the Western envoy in Byzantium, special political reasons played a significant role in the case. For the definition of "alien" in Constantinople, see above, 138, and notes 191–92.

^{19a} Again, the mistrust of alien agitators occupied a considerable place in Karaite-Rabbanite polemical exchanges of earlier periods as well. Thus, Sahl ben Maṣṣliḥ, who was apparently denied access to the Rabbanite public in some communities outside Palestine (cf. above, 84, note 73), waved his Palestinian identity (אני מבית המקדש) to justify his intrusion. See on this above, 83 f., note 71. On the other hand, Sahl himself taunted his Rabbanite opponents for letting the guidance of Babylonian Jewish affairs fall in the hands of Saadyah, a stranger from Egypt. Cf. *Likkūṭē*, App. III, 22 f.: עיי' ירמיה' מ'יו כ], אל ארץ דשא אכוריה [=לבבל — עיי' ירמיה' נ' יא], להטעות שוגים ולחבל סמדרי פוריה [=כנסת ישראל]. כואח עשה בן צר[ן]עה [=ירבעם בן נבט]

However, as will be shown presently, the Byzantine accusation of foreignness has a new ring, unheard of in the Islamic environment in which both Saadyah and Sahl ben Maṣṣliḥ were active in the tenth century.

²⁰ *Lekah Ṭob* on Leviticus, 69 [35a]: והשוטים אשר באו וחדשו דתות מקרוב באו: לא שערום אבותינו זיל "doctrines" and not to "those fools." Even with this lessened emphasis the idea expressed in the first clause (והשוטים אשר באו) remains the same.

Muslim environment and it was this foreign background that corroded their Jewishness.

These men deeply corrupted [the true Jewish mode of life] *being disciples of Ishmaelites* and acting under the weight of a mad spirit which assailed their brains!"²¹

This blunt pointing to a group's allegiance to Muslim culture must have had a peculiar ring in a Christian Empire at the time of the initial excitement caused by the First Crusade. But even earlier, a generation prior to Tobias, the stamp of foreignness was a label that could not easily be ignored, notwithstanding the intrinsic heterogeneity of the Byzantine society. How much more so when, as in the present case, the claim was no mere insinuation but did contain a great deal of truth. Indeed: The center of Karaite spiritual creativity was in Muslim Palestine. The treasury of Karaite wealth and the reservoir of Karaite political power was in Muslim Egypt. All Karaite literature to speak of was in Arabic and as yet unavailable in any other language. Karaite philosophy was a faithful reflection of the Islamic *Kalām*; Karaite legal dialectics depended very much on the Islamic principles of *ḳiyās* and *ijmā'*; Karaite insistence on lunar observation smacked of the Islamic lunar year; and the circulating Rabbanite stories stressed (not without calculated intention) the alleged role of the Muslim jurist Abū Ḥanīfa in advising 'Anan how to break away from the Jewish fold.

FACING THE ACCUSATION OF FOREIGNNESS

To be sure, some Karaite conservatives in Byzantium proper, such as the late eleventh-century author of the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous* quoted earlier in this study, did relish the proud memories of an Islamic past. Unmindful of the changed conditions in Byzantine Karaite life and of the changing climate in a changing world, they continued to follow the ninth-century al-Ḳūmisi in hailing the traditionally pro-Karaite Caliphate as the power which gave the sect its first real lease on life. It was not [states the Byzantine Karaite commentator in 1088] until

there arose the Kingdom of the Small Horn [i.e., Islām] that God gave a chance to the Karaites to speak up openly. And God strengthened the sectaries over and above the Rabbanites, so much so that the latter did not dare utter a word, not even against the smallest boy among the Karaites. Indeed, that was tantamount to half a Redemption.²²

²¹ *Lekah Ṭob* on Leviticus, 38 f. [19b f.]: וּאֲחֵרֵי כֵן קָמוּ תְּרַבּוּת אַנְשִׁים חֲטָאִים שֶׁלֹּא יָדְעוּ בֵּין יְמֵינָם לְשִׁמְאֵלִם אֱלֹהֵי חֲכָמִים הָמָּה לְהִרְעֵ וּלְהַטִּיב לֹא יָדְעוּ אֲשֶׁר הַעֲמִיקוּ שַׁחְתּוֹ מִלִּימּוֹד הַיִּשְׁמַעְלִים וּבְרֵי רַבּוּתוֹנוֹ מִמִּשְׁקַל רֹחַ חַיִּית שֶׁלֹּה בְּקִדְקוּדָם וְלֹא סָמְכוּ עַל דְּבָרֵי רַבּוּתוֹנוֹ. See the rest of the passage above, 361, and note 16.

²² Cf. the excerpt in *Likḳūṭē*, App. VII, 73 (the additional sentence, offered here in

These nostalgic utterances notwithstanding, responsible leaders of Byzantine Karaism sensed the danger inherent in the Rabbanite challenge. They understood that *there would, indeed, be no hope of tearing down the curtain of foreignness as long as no positive, constructive and conscious effort was made by the Karaites in the Empire to send deeper roots into the soil of the new country that was their home now and to become part and parcel of Byzantine Jewry*. This was not only of utmost importance as a defense against Rabbanite needling about alien allegiance. It was also increasingly indispensable for the sake of the growing third, fourth and fifth generations of native Byzantines of Karaite creed for whom the Greek language and culture became synonymous with their own. These native Western Karaites, who breathed the air of a totally different cultural climate, might in time lose contact with the roots of the movement in the East if not given the necessary stamina for further creativity.

It therefore was imperative to transplant the best and the latest of the authoritative expression of Karaite thought and belief into the soil of the Byzantine Empire and have it spelled out *in terms similar to those of the general Jewish literature in Byzantium*—that is, *in Hebrew, with occasional Greek glosses*. Thus a triple purpose would have been served at once: a) proving to the Rabbanite neighbors that there did exist a coherent, scholarly system of Karaite exposition of Mosaic Law and not just a made-up jumble of willful anti-talmudic excesses;²³ b) familiar-

parentheses, is given from the Leiden MS of the work, Warner No. 3, 226a-b): וכאשר קמה קרן זעירא נתן יי' פתחון פה לבעלי מקרא והגבירים יי' עליהם [—על הרבנים] ולא יוכלו לדבר לפני נער קטון של קראים. וזה חצי ישועה. (ונשאל מיני שיקיים יי' שאמר [זכרי' י"א יד] ואבדע את מקלי השני [את החובלים] להפך [את האורה בין יהודה ובין ישראל]) Cf. *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 83a-b, No. 50, where, however, Assaf wrongly attributed the text to Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah; see above, 246, note 93. Cf. also *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, Introd., 10b: דבקו יחד [= הקראים] במלכות קרן זעירה: דרשו צורם למלאת פי כירא. That this claim had historical foundations goes without saying. Cf., for instance, the statements of Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, quoted above, 55, note 75, and 164 f.

The expression *ḳeren ze'irah* (Small Horn, i.e., Islām), is based on the apocalyptic picture in the Book of Daniel, 7:8 and 8:9.

²³ Cf. *Lekaḥ Tōb* on Leviticus, 126 [63b], as quoted above, 361, and note 15: ואם חכמים המה ואם תורת אלהינו היתה כמו שאומרים, למה לא דרשו התורה על מתכונתה כדרך חכמי ישראל? Compare this challenge with the already-quoted statement of Ibn Daūd in *Seder haḳ-Ḳabbalah*, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles* I, 81 (cf. above, 35, end of note 21).

Ibn Daūd's biased summary of the Karaite contribution to Jewish culture was already commented upon above, 359, note 9, and explained as mainly referring to Spain proper. Nevertheless, it serves as an indicator of the *general* line of Rabbanite attack on the sectarians. It goes without saying that Tobias ben Eliezer, active in a non-Arabic-speaking country, could with much greater truthfulness point to the still negligible amount of *Hebrew* literary productions among the Karaites of Byzantium in the generations preceding his own. At the end of the eleventh century, however, the

izing local Rabbinism with the content of this Karaite system in the field of law, biblical exegesis and philosophy, by making it available in a language which a Byzantine Rabbanite could understand; and, last but not least, c) presenting the younger generation of native Byzantine Karaites with a heritage which they could be proud of and which they could consider a contribution to the general Jewish creative effort of their own country.

Thus came into being the great Literary Project of Byzantine Karaism. A reconstruction of its scope, its organization, and of the successive stages of its development will be attempted in the last part of the present chapter. Before embarking, however, on such task, we must consider still another aspect of the Karaites' struggle within the Byzantine society: their struggle with other non-normative Jewish groups which settled at that time in the Byzantine Empire.

THE CHALLENGE OF NON-KARAITE SECTARIES

The Rabbanite challenge was not the sole source of anxiety to Karaite leadership in Byzantium. True, Rabbanites undoubtedly formed the preponderant majority in the local Jewish communities; yet, they were by no means the Karaites' only Jewish neighbors on Byzantine soil. With the above-described general flux of populations which brought in eastern immigrant elements into the imperial territories,²⁴ other Jewish groups, too, may have drifted along with the current. These groups would settle as a matter of course in the Jewish neighborhood, alongside the Karaite and Rabbanite communities of the given locality.

That at least two such non-Karaite splinter sects were still a reality in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is clearly indicated by contemporaneous sources. One of our informants is Elijah ben Abraham, the oft-quoted Karaite author of the *Hillūḳ*, or "History of the Rift between the Karaites and the Rabbanites."²⁵ Blaming the many divisions in Jewry for God's indifference toward His people, this Byzantine Karaite historian gladly noted a change "nowadays," i.e., in the twelfth century. Out of as many as fourteen sects which, by his count, arose in the Jewish society since the period of the Second Commonwealth, no more than four [separate Jewish] creeds [survive] till our own time; [they are:] the

great Literary Project of Byzantine Karaism (on which cf. later in this chapter) had already reached considerable proportions. Indeed, Tobias himself could not help admitting familiarity with some local Karaite creations. See on this above, 290 f.

²⁴ See above, Chapter III, esp. 102 ff.

²⁵ Cf. above, 29, note 7.

creed of the Rabbanites, the creed of the Karaites, the Tiflisite creed and that of Mishawayh.²⁶

Now, further in his story, Elijah chose to neglect that part of the Karaite struggle within the Jewish society which was directed against the Tiflisites and the Mishawites. He limited his account to the tracing of Karaite relations with the Rabbanites alone.²⁷ In this, undoubtedly, the twelfth-century Karaite author was guided by a twelfth-century Karaite appraisal of whence the greatest danger to the sect in Byzantium might be expected. However, this correct understanding of the situation as it presented itself in Elijah's own time hardly reflected the balance of power in the Jewish camp in previous generations. In those earlier times, Karaism's fighting animus was not directed against the Rabbanites alone. The war which the Karaites had to wage against other sectarians was as prolonged in duration as their campaign against Rabbinism and by no means easily won. The truth of the matter is that the Karaite doctrine of 'Anan ben David was far from becoming the least common denominator for all brands of anti-talmudic protest, as the reigning "monolithic" school would have it.²⁸ On the contrary: Not only did some pre-'Ananite sects (like the 'Isūnians and the Yūdghānites) continue their independent existence for at least two centuries after 'Anan,²⁹ but there also arose several new sectarian trends subsequent to the 'Ananite schism. These were oriented as much against the policies of 'Anan as against the Rabbinic way of life.³⁰ In fact, they constituted a far greater threat to the

²⁶ Cf. *Hillūk*, in Pinsker, *Liḳḳūtē Qadmoniyyoth*, App. XII, 100: כי מעה שנחרבה הבורה שבנתו מבין ישראל נזר ועטרה, רהיק [—רחוק] והארון והכבוד והנבואה הברורה, מאז ועד עתה נחלקו הדעות... ועל עילה זו אנו נשכחים כל אלה השנים... ומאז ועד היום הזה קמו ביניהם בשיעור יד דתות. והיום אין בזמננו כ"א [=כי אם] ד' דתות, דת רבנים ודת קראים ודת תפליסיים ודת משוי. [=בצונוחיתנו הרבים] מאז ועד עתה קמו בישראל מחבלים ברם ד' צבאות חודשו דתות חדשות והם בשיעור י"ד. וברוב הימים טפו תמו רובם ולא נשארו ב"א ד' והיום הם בזמננו, והם כת רבנים שיצאו מהבלל וחודשו שניינים וקראים קבלה וכת קראים והם עמדו על עמדם ולא החליפו ממה שהיו מימי הנביאים וכת תפליסיים (Leiden MS Warner No. 25⁸ conforms, on the whole, with the first version.)

²⁷ *Ibid.*: ולא ערכנו עתה לסדר טיב ד' הדתות כ"א לדת הקראים לברם. In reality, however, Elijah dealt not so much with the Karaites *per se* as with Karaites and Rabbanites in their mutual relation through history. Cf. the immediate continuation of the just quoted text: אמרו בני מקרא כי כנוי שם קראים אחרים קראום בן, מפני כי לא יאמינו בחורה החדשה. הקרואה חורה שבע"פ... קבצוה יהודים ובתורה להם והם הנקראים רבנים דור אחר דור.

²⁸ For a partial criticism of that school cf. above, 7 f., 205.

²⁹ For the 'Isūnians cf., for instance, above, 214 f. (and note 22), 274, note 62, and below, 380 f., note 64. On the survival of Yūdghānism in the tenth century, see *Kirkisānī, Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 59; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 391.

³⁰ Daniel al-Ḳūmisī's pronounced anti-'Ananism has already been discussed on various occasions in this volume. Cf. above, e.g., 19, 21 f., 211 f. (and notes 14 and 15). Earlier in the ninth century, another heresiarch, *Isma'īl al-Ukbarī*, "made little of 'Anan and often called him stupid." "In his writings he treated 'Anan in the most

Karaite movement than to the Rabbanite majority and necessitated much more alertness and vigilance on the part of Karaite leadership than on the part of the general Jewish authorities.

Both Jewish sects which the Byzantine Elijah ben Abraham reported as still coexisting with the Rabbanites and the Karaites in the twelfth century were, indeed, of post-‘Ananite vintage. They were remnants of that series of anti-Rabbinic—yet, at the same time, anti-‘Ananite—deviationist movements which cropped up during the ninth century within the non-normative Jewish camp under Islām. Of these movements only one—that of the already discussed Daniel al-Ḳūmisī—remained within the Karaite fold in spite of having departed from the ‘Ananite doctrine.³¹ Transferring, we recall, the scene of intra-party struggle to Palestine, the al-Ḳūmisī school had formulated a new Karaite platform and had brought about a marvelous regeneration of anti-Rabbanite dissent under the banner of Palestino-centricism.³²

Not so the other ninth-century nonconformist varieties. These can be grouped in two classes. One contained movements which, like the Tiflisites, never ceased to share with official Karaism the basic premises of non-normative *Weltanschauung*. Spearheaded by secessionist elements which apparently issued from the ranks of ‘Ananism itself, they differed from the Karaite sect merely on details of observance, on matters of policy, and, possibly, in their respective social composition. Nevertheless, these differences were sufficiently decisive at the time to set the movements apart from—though not really against—each other.³³ In the other class were grouped those dissident segments of Jewry which, like the

insulting manner, attributing to him the stupidity of an ass.” Cf Ḳirḳisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 13, 56 f.; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 329, 388, and, briefly, *Karaite Anthology*, 52.

³¹ Ḳirḳisānī listed al-Ḳūmisī as an independent religious thinker and founder of a religious system (*madhhab*). He allotted to him separate paragraphs in both the general list (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 14) and the individual expositions (*ibid.*, I, 58 f.). At the same time, he stressed Daniel’s continued membership in the broader framework of Karaism. He added, however, that “although he [i.e., Daniel] is an excellent scholar in the Scripture and in philology, there is one thing which greatly injures his prestige among some of our coreligionists, namely his dislike of the sect of ‘Anan, whom he assails very strongly.” Cf. *ibid.*, I, 5. See Nemoy’s Eng. tr. in *HUCA*, VII (1930), 321, 330, 390 f., and, partly, in *Karaite Anthology*, 53. See also above, 212, note 15.

³² See above, 19, 22, 309 ff.

³³ Yefeth ben ‘Alī (quoted by Pinsker, *Likḳūḡē*, 26) seems to be the only Karaite scholar who accused at-Tifisī of having forsaken also the belief in resurrection from the dead; this point was not reported by Ḳirḳisānī or any other Karaite scholar who followed Ḳirḳisānī’s “Survey of Jewish Sects.” Yefeth concluded his description by saying that “God shall cancel these creeds and bring shame on [their adherents].” This is by far the strongest expression ever used by a Karaite against Tiflism. Consid-

Mishawites, were from the outset independent of, indeed incongruous with, the 'Ananite school.³⁴ Rallied around the Mishawite ideology, they became Karaism's most pronounced enemies, and the task of combatting them constituted for several generations a major preoccupation of Karaite scholars and leaders.

THE TIFLISITES

Unfortunately, none of the non-Karaite sectarian writings has survived to tell the story. In reconstructing the Tiflisite and Mishawite dissent we must fall back mainly on references and descriptions included (for the sake of refutation) in the literature of the sects' *Karaite* opponents. Many of these references are not clear in the first place. Some of them plainly bear the earmarks of misrepresentation, innuendo and slander. Even where the general trustworthiness of the text is beyond reproach, the reader is set wondering how thick is the layer of partisan bias and of sheer polemical enthusiasm that envelops the kernel of authentic truth undoubtedly embedded in it.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of the present study, the bias and acrimony permeating the Karaite accounts are not devoid of interest and intrinsic value. Our objective here is not to study the teachings of the Tiflisite and Mishawite schools *per se*, but to observe the molding of the attitude of Byzantine Karaites toward those of their neighbors who followed these schools. Hence, the intensity of Karaite pronouncements against Tiflism and Mishawism is in itself a revealing piece of evidence. Its slackening or increase through the ages testifies unwittingly to Karaism's feeling of security or insecurity in the face of possible Tiflisite or Mishawite inroads in its midst, and enables us, indirectly, to speculate on the existence and extent of such inroads.

To begin with the Tiflisites, it may be presumed that these followers of Abū 'Imrān (Mūsā) az-Za'farānī, who in the ninth century moved from

ering Yefeth's intense messianism (see above, 77 f., 94 f.), his animosity toward a sect which did not believe (or so he thought) in resurrection is quite understandable.

In reality, Daniel al-Ḳūmisī, who lived a generation or so after at-Tiflisī, reported that some [Babylonian] *Karaites* denied resurrection from the dead. That group maintained also, according to al-Ḳūmisī's account, that man's spirit, and not his body, is the object of God's reward or punishment. Cf. above, 220, note 29: אומרים משפט ייי על הרוח לבדה ולא על הגוף... גם כחש בתחיית המתים. However, the relationship between that *Karaite splinter group* and the *independent Tiflisite sect* is unknown.

³⁴ A similar difference between these two groups regarding their respective kinship or incongruity with *Samaritan* views has been noted by Wreschner, *Samaritanische Traditionen*, xi f., note 10. Some details there, however, need to be corrected.

Babylonia to the Armenian city of Tiflis (whence his by-name at-Tiflisi), were mainly concentrated in Armenia.³⁵ Nothing is known of their further history or whether they succeeded (or even attempted) to sink roots outside Armenia. The available Byzantine Karaite sources are not too helpful regarding Karaite contacts with them in the eleventh or the twelfth centuries within the boundaries of the Empire. Neither the above-quoted Elijah ben Abraham nor his contemporary, the Constantinopolitan Hadassī, reveal explicitly that these sectaries were ever really encountered, say, in the streets of Péra or in some Anatolian Jewish community. All that Elijah has attested to was the *existence* of the Tiflisite sect in his time. He may well have alluded to contemporary Tiflisites in Armenia proper. Information on these sectaries could have been brought in by Armenian Rabbanites or Karaites arriving in the Empire;³⁶ a group of Armenian Karaites was, we remember, reported to have visited (or temporarily settled) in Constantinople in the twelfth century.³⁷

Hadassī, on the other hand, spoke explicitly of the ninth-century heresiarch himself rather than of his later followers. His partly garbled account of the Tiflisite doctrine was produced mainly on the basis of early literary material and was affected only little by actual observation of the Byzantine scene. Nevertheless, several phrases in Hadassī's report on at-Tiflisi have a somewhat urgent ring and show some amount of special interest which is perhaps not purely academic. Chances are that this interest may be pointing to direct contacts of Hadassī's Byzantine coreligionists with the Tiflisite dissenters.

The impression becomes even stronger when the twelfth-century Hebrew text of Hadassī is compared with the tenth-century presentation by Ẓirḳisānī, the Arabic-writing Karaite historian in Babylonia. The latter utilized the same literature perused by Hadassī two hundred years later. However, he made no personal acquaintance with the dissidents, since they were at that time but a small group limited to the far-off city of Tiflis. His report of at-Tiflisi's life and doctrine is factual, detached, almost indifferent. The very same report sounds differently in the phrasing of a Hadassī. Unlike Ẓirḳisānī, Hadassī does not merely relate facts: he censures them, he praises them, he evaluates them as to their relation to the Karaite doctrine. Thus, on the one hand, he *censures* the calendar deviation advocated by at-Tiflisi. Similarly he *censures* the

³⁵ Cf. above, 64 f. (note 21), 128, and note 155 there.

³⁶ See above, 128.

³⁷ Cf. our suggestion above, 128 f., and the latter part of note 157 there.

latter's permission to consume meat in the Diaspora.³⁸ On the other hand, he *praises* at-Tiflīsī for having endorsed such laws of incest as are "in line with the pronouncements of the Karaites, the 'Mourners of Zion'." He *hails*, further, at-Tiflīsī's adherence to Karaite dietary laws and his enjoining the celebration of the Feast of Weeks on a Sunday, "after the fashion of those who tremble at [the word of] the Most High, the Mourners of the Temple of God and of the City of Jerusalem."³⁹

³⁸ Herewith the pertinent texts by Ẓirkīsānī and Hadassī are given for comparison (reversing the sentence order in Ẓirkīsānī to make it parallel Hadassī):

Ẓirkīsānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 57 (Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII [1930], 389): فاما التفليسي فانه: كان... يتخذ رأس الشهر منذ اول اليوم الذي (after having agreed on principle with Ismā'il al-'Ukbarī that it is this separation of the moon from the sun [المفارقة] that decides the beginning of the new month; cf. further, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 790 f.); وله ايضا اوراق في اطلاق اللحم...

Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 41d, Alphabet פירוד נפרד ונתחלף מן העדה בדברי' אחדי: בנזן: 98: שלקח ראש החדש בבטוי הירח וסמך בפסוקי' המבדים: שאמר שאו זמרה ותנו תוף וגו' תקעו בחדש שופר בבטה ליום תגיבו: בי חק לישראל הוא וגו' ופירש פירושי' אבודים: ברוח קידים: אך החיר הכשר עם חלביו באשר הוא הגוף בנו גלותך. For the implication of the beginning phrase of this passage, see next note.

To be sure, Ẓirkīsānī, too, gives an account (and a refutation) of the peculiar exegesis of Ps. 81: 4 (בכסה < בבטוי הירח) which aroused the wrath of Hadassī. However, he does not associate it explicitly with at-Tiflīsī. Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, IV, 803 f.

³⁹ Ẓirkīsānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 57 (Eng. tr., *HUCA*, VII [1930], 389): وانما خالفا (speaking of both at-Tiflīsī and ar-Ramlī) الجماعة في اشياء يسيرة مثل العنصرة بالاحد وتحريم الالبه والعكوة وابنة الاخ وابنة الاخت

Hadassī, *loc. cit.*: פירש ואטר בה האח ובה האחות ובדומה לזה בדברי בעלי המקרא אבלי ציון, אף אטר האליה העובר והמעובר: ותג השבועות חייב ביום ראשון בחרדי עלין: אבלי מקדש ה' יירושלי' עירך

The difference between the calm and rather sympathetic treatment of the Tiflisite doctrine by Ẓirkīsānī and the more militant approach of Hadassī is well manifested also in their respective interpretations of the beginning of the passage. In the source from which both Ẓirkīsānī and Hadassī drew their material they found the following opening phrase: "He [=at-Tiflīsī] (or: "They," i.e., at-Tiflīsī and ar-Ramlī) differed from the general body [*al-jamā'a*]." Ẓirkīsānī understood it to mean "the general body of the nation," i.e., the Rabbanites. Hence, he listed after that sentence those practices of at-Tiflīsī which seemed to him *commendable* because of their *anti-Rabbanite* slant: the fixing of the Pentecost on a Sunday, the prohibition of the fat-tail, and stringency in the laws of incest. In the *second* part, however, he added those practices on which at-Tiflīsī *diverged* from the *Karaites*: the calendar procedure and the consumption of meat.

Not so Hadassī (or the scholar before him who translated the original source into Hebrew). He interpreted the opening phrase to mean that "at-Tiflīsī diverged from the general body of the *sectarians*" (translating it in Hebrew as *edah*, which, we remember, had a legal sectarian connotation). Consequently, he followed up the sentence with a list of deviations which he *condemned*: the calendary system of the Tiflisites and their laxity with regard to the consumption of meat in the Diaspora. Only in the *second* part of the passage were the *praiseworthy* practices also enumerated: stringent laws of incest, prohibition of fat-tail, etc., and the fixing of Pentecost on Sunday.

Whether this stronger wording by Hadassî is purely accidental or in keeping with Hadassî's *regular* style is a question of judgment. The assumption must not be excluded that it reflects a more personal involvement. Hadassî may have had in mind living Tiflisites whom he knew from the local Constantinopolitan scene. Possibly, the late tenth- and eleventh-century influx of Armenians, Gentile and Jewish, into the Byzantine domains caused also some Tiflisites to appear in the Byzantine Jewish communities. Nothing definite, however, can be said in the matter on the basis of the extant sources.

THE MISHAWITES

Infinitely more involved was the pattern of relationship between the Karaites in Byzantium and the Mishawite sect there. The intensity permeating Karaite reports on this other survivor of the ninth-century anti-Rabbanite (and, at once, anti-'Ananite) revolt is most striking. While Tiflism, separate but never really antagonistic, left almost no trace in Karaite literature and polemics (except for a general inclusion thereof in the surveys of Jewish sectarianism), the Mishawite heresy became a recurrent theme for Karaite controversialists; so [one may surmise] was the Karaite doctrine to the spokesmen of Mishawism.

Of course, the frequency of anti-Mishawite references in Karaite polemical compositions may prove misleading. Thus, judging merely by the fact that, since the mid-eleventh century till as late as 1490, refutations of Mishawite views do not leave the pages of Byzantine Karaite literature, one might be inclined to infer that Mishawism was all along—for half a millennium almost—a burning issue to the Empire's Karaites. This is a mistaken impression. A careful perusal of that literature prompts us to discard all Karaite references belonging to periods later than, say, 1200–1250 as mere academic considerations.⁴⁰

This disposes of the difference in interpretation which is also apparent in modern studies. Thus, Nemoj (*HUCA*, VII [1930], 389) tended to understand *Qırkısanî* as pointing to at-Tiflîsî's divergence from the "general body of the sectarians." Mahler, on the other hand (*Haç-Şara'im*, 196, note 8), censured Nemoj's interpretation by invoking the Hadassî text. Paradoxically, in the light of the above analysis of both texts, none of these scholars was right: *Qırkısanî* had the body of the whole nation in mind, while Hadassî pointed to the sectarians alone.

⁴⁰ Cf., for instance, *Mibhar* on Leviticus, 6a. The late thirteenth-century Aaron ben Joseph quite clearly bases there his polemic against Mishawayh (or rather against Ibn Ezra who uses an argument expounded earlier by Mishawayh) on literary sources alone; Aaron invokes the eleventh-century Byzantine *Oşar Neḥmad* of Tobias ben Moses. Similarly, the fourteenth-century Aaron ben Elijah declares himself indebted in his anti-Mishawite polemics to earlier literary compositions; he goes back even to the

Even such earlier testimonies as those offered by Byzantine Karaite authorities of the twelfth century are primarily of *chronological* value; they speak of the Mishawites as still existing in their time. They hardly add, however, to the elucidation of Karaite-Mishawite *relations* in the twelfth century or earlier. Elijah ben Abraham's brief statement has already been cited: he merely counted Mishawism among the four Jewish sects active in his generation.⁴¹ Similarly, Yehūdah Hadassī left no room for doubt that the Mishawites "continue to observe to this day" (i.e., about the middle of the twelfth century) the heretical practices he ascribed to their founder.⁴² There is, however, no sign of sarcasm or contempt in the statement of this scholar comparable to that which we encounter in the earlier source underlying his account.⁴³ Nor did Hadassī care to go beyond the *old* presentation of Mishawism and to enumerate also the *later*, characteristically Byzantine features of the sect; these features, we realize now, were unknown to earlier reporters but were prevalent in the Mishawite community of Byzantium in Hadassī's own day. Indeed, the very preoccupation of Hadassī with Mishawite teachings was, in the main, but part and parcel of his general survey of *all* sects. It was hardly prompted by a sense of need to repel contemporaneous Mishawite encroachments on the Karaite way of life in Byzantium. Evidently, the dwindling numbers of Mishawite followers, while still conspicuous enough to be noted by contemporary observers, ceased in the twelfth century to spell danger to the Byzantine Karaite community.

The two foundation-stones on which the reconstruction of the Mishawite-Karaite story must rest, then, are the Karaite texts of the early tenth and the mid-eleventh centuries. The first source—Kırķışānī's "Survey of Jewish Sects"—originated in the Islamic environment in which the formation of the Mishawite sect had taken place. This source was compiled just a few decades after the event (about 937 C.E.). It was from an abridged version of that "Survey" that Hadassī drew up, some two centuries later, his afocredited account of Mishawite teachings.⁴⁴

tenth-century Kırķışānī. Cf., e.g., his *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Sheḥīṭah*, Ch. XX, 95a, and earlier, Section *Pesaḥ*, Ch. VII, 42b, or in his *Kether Tōrah* on Numbers, 10a. See further the fifteenth-century *Addereth Eliyyahū* (interrupted in 1490), in which Elijah Bashyachi bases the whole Ch. XVIII of Section *Sheḥīṭah* (without openly acknowledging it) on *Oṣar Neḥmad* of Tobias ben Moses. See below, 389, note 91.

⁴¹ Cf. above, 366 f., and note 26 there.

⁴² *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98: וכן עושים עד היום הזה.

⁴³ See the reference in the next note.

⁴⁴ The "Survey" was incorporated into the First Discourse of *Kitāb al-Anwār*

not only fails to enumerate important characteristics which were attributed to Mishawism in Byzantium, but also it can hardly match the amount of contempt and abuse which Tobias poured on the heads of his Mishawite compatriots. It seems that, as far as our sources go, only Tobias, the eleventh-century leader of the Karaites in the Empire, viewed Mishawism as a most serious menace to his flock. The fury with which Tobias descended upon the avowed founder of the Mishawite sect, on his "priests"⁵⁰ and on their teachings (including matters which seemingly did not call for practical application) is, indeed, without parallel in Karaite literature. Even Karaism's anti-Saadyan campaign at its worst never accused Saadyah Gaon, for instance, of leaving the fold, the way Tobias did with regard to Mishawayh and his followers. And all that—a hundred and fifty years *after* Ẓirḳisānī and in a climate far removed from that which Ẓirḳisānī knew well and which produced the Mishawite movement in the first place!

Thus, allowing even for exaggerations perpetrated in the heat of controversy, the twin impression is inevitable: a) that it was chiefly the brand of Mishawite practice which was known in Byzantium (and not so much that which was described by Ẓirḳisānī in Babylonia a century and a half earlier) that was felt to be a real threat to Karaism; and b) that it was, consequently, the eleventh-century Byzantine Karaite community (and not so much the Karaite leadership in Babylonia) that considered the warding-off of the Mishawite danger an assignment of the first order. As such, Karaism's anti-Mishawite struggle belongs, more than anywhere else, in our eleventh-century story of the formative years of Karaite life in Byzantium.

THE TEACHINGS OF MISHAWAYH

Who were the Mishawites?

A careful analysis of all the available sources as well as of the cognate material which was revealed and interpreted by the recent studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls permits us to draw a completely new picture of the Mishawite heresy and its history.⁵¹ Apart from a marked deviation in

⁵⁰ The expression is כמריי. It matches Tobias' (and, earlier, Salman ben Yerūham's) contemptuous remark regarding Saadyah and his *Rabbanite* colleagues. Cf. Salman's *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, 59 (top): ופיחומי טעדיה וכמריי; and the Tobias text below, 391, and note 98.

⁵¹ The summary presented here is extracted from my *Mishawiyyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*, to be published separate-

dietary matters (of which later), the most conspicuous nonconformism in which the sect had indulged was in the field of calendation. This field, we remember, was crucial in the sect-forming process of all times: calendar independence heralded a sect's self-determination and final separation from the Mother Institution.⁵²

The ninth-century calendar doctrine of Mishawayh al-'Ukbarī (a native of 'Ukbara in the Baghdād region) subscribed to the *solar principle* as the one and only determinant of calendar reckoning. This principle, assuming a solar year of 364 days, ensured the yearly return of fasts and feasts on fixed days in the *week*, rather than on fixed days of *months* (the way lunar calendation, common to all other segments of medieval Jewry, would have it).⁵³ Thus, Mishawayh demanded the permanent fixing of the Day of Atonement on a Sabbath;⁵⁴ the interdependent annual recurrence of Passover on a Thursday;⁵⁵ the celebration of Pentecost on the Sunday which falls seven weeks subsequent to the first Sunday after Passover;⁵⁶ and regularity in the proclamation of the first day of each month (*Rōsh-Hodesh*), apparently by accepting a solar thirty-day mensal unit.⁵⁷

ly. There, the full documentation, bibliography and discussion of earlier theses are given.

⁵² Cf. above, 293.

⁵³ This has correctly been stressed by A. Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jours liturgiques de la semaine," *VT*, VII (1957), 44, and *La date de la cène*, 46 f.

⁵⁴ The permanent appointment of the fast on a Sabbath was designed to emphasize the double holiness of the Day of Atonement, presumably enjoined by the biblical lawmaker in the double term *shabbath shabbathōn* (Lev. 23:32). Cf. Ẕirḳisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 58 (Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 390); Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98.

⁵⁵ See the references in the previous note. The interdependence results, of course, from the legally prescribed lapse of time between the holidays.

⁵⁶ Ẕirḳisānī (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 57 f.; *HUCA*, VII [1930], 390) and Hadassī (*Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98) ridiculed Mishawayh for having asserted, on the one hand, with all sectarians, that Pentecost must fall on a Sunday, without knowing, however, which Sunday it was to be. A closer look at the problem will reveal that, contrary to the insinuations of his Karaite opponents, Mishawayh had a definite idea which "morrow after the Sabbath" was to inaugurate the seven-week count from Passover to Pentecost. By rejecting unequivocally the Karaite and Samaritan custom of beginning the count on the Sunday which falls *within* the Passover week, Mishawayh made his position clear beyond any doubt. He obviously espoused the sectarian alternative: the Sunday *after* Passover week. This was the procedure advocated by the *Book of Jubilees* and the Qumrān sect.

⁵⁷ This is how I understand Ẕirḳisānī's statement that Mishawayh "was in doubt as to how to fix the beginning of months, since he could not decide what system to adopt" (وكان شاكا في معرفة رؤوس الشهور لا يعلم باى شيء يجب ان يتخذ). Cf. *Kitāb*

Moreover, he applied the solar principle to the day measure as well, rejecting the conventional count of calendar-days from evening to evening; the days, including the Sabbaths, were to be counted from morning to morning.⁵⁸ This last point was particularly objectionable later to Jews living in regions with a large Christian population (e.g., Jerusalem and Palestine in general, Western Syria, Byzantium and Spain). Cancelling, as it did, the sacrosanct institution of Sabbath eve and extending the holiness of the Lord's day to the night preceding Sunday, it was hastily decried as "Christian-oriented."⁵⁹ Anti-Mishawite propagandists failed (or refused) to perceive the Jewish origin of that practice and the broader calendary concept of which it was part and parcel.⁶⁰ The truth of the matter is that Mishawayh's doctrine intended merely to restore an archaic *Jewish* calendar based on the solar system. Such a calendar was expounded in the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* and the *Ethiopic Enoch*.⁶¹

al-Anwār, I, 58 (*HUCA*, VII [1930], 390). Cf. further Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98: רגם היה בספק על ידיעת ראשי החדשים ולא ידע בבידור באי זה יעמוד כחודש. Here again, such terms as "doubt" or "indecision," sarcastically used by ʔırkışānī, are plainly misnomers. Once having accepted a solar calendar of 364 days, Mishawayh could not have entertained any doubts as to the inner division of the year. He must have espoused the pattern advocated by the *Book of Jubilees*: four equal seasons of 91 days, each comprising three 30-day mensal units plus one day.

⁵⁸ See the texts adduced below, 395 ff. (and notes).

⁵⁹ Stressing the "Jewishness" of the evening-to-evening count of days, Ibn Ezra, in an obvious polemic against Mishawism (דברי החזנים, or; רבים חסרי אמונה השתבשו), states: מנהג ארצות ערלים אינו במנהג ארץ ישראל (on Ex. 16:25). Cf. further, M. Friedländer, "Ibn Ezra in England," *JQR* (O.S.), VIII (1896), 149, note 2, and 152, note 2, as well as in the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 57, note 3.

For the accusations of "Christian orientation," tossed against the Mishawites by Tobias ben Moses in Byzantium, see below, 402. Some of these accusations may already have been voiced by Yefeth ben 'Alī in Palestine (cf. above, 375, note 49). Indeed, chances are that Ibn Ezra learned of the Mishawite views from *Oṣar Neḥmad* of Tobias or, even more likely, from the commentaries of Yefeth. The latter, as we know, exerted tremendous influence on Ibn Ezra's biblical exegesis. At any rate, there is no indication that the Spanish Rabbanite exegete ever met the heretics in person.

⁶⁰ Indeed, scholars have suggested viewing certain passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls as corrections of eleventh-century Karaite (or Rabbanite) scribes. The scribes must have been anxious to make the texts correspond to the lunar calculation almost unanimously accepted by medieval Jewry. Cf. Talmon's pertinent remarks in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV (1958), 193 f., and Wernberg-Moller, *Revue de Qumrān*, I (1958), 141 (quoting P. R. Weis).

⁶¹ Cf. the *Book of Jubilees*, vi, in Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, II, 22 f. (or M. Goldmann's Hebrew version, in A. Kahana, *Has-Sefarim ha-Ḥiṣṣōnim*, I, Bk. 1, 235 f.); *Book of Enoch*, lxxii, in Charles, II, 237-39 (or in the Hebrew rendering of A. Kahana and J. Feitelovitch, *Has-Sefarim ha-Ḥiṣṣōnim*, I, Bk. 1, 67-69).

Apparently, the sectaries of the Judaeen Desert in the time of the Second Commonwealth also adhered to it.⁶²

THEORY AND PRACTICE

All these calendary teachings of Mishawayh remained, however, at first, in the realm of theory only; neither Mishawayh himself nor his followers in Babylonia dared apply them *in practice*. Indeed, they dared not even *mention* in Babylonia their (theoretical) adherence to the morning-to-morning count of calendar-days. This solar measure of day units, though not *inherent* in the general solar calendation concept, could not have been a later innovation; yet, it is known only from *Byzantine* Karaite literature, i.e., from works created some two centuries after Mishawayh and away from the climate of opinion of Jewish Babylonia. In Babylonia proper, the Mishawites, opposed to the time reckoning system of *both* the normative majority and the sectarian minorities, resigned themselves to following the precalculated *Rabbanite* calendar as the lesser of the two evils.

All coins are clipped anyway [Mishawayh is reported to have advised his followers], you might as well hold on to the counterfeit that is at hand.⁶³

For mid-ninth-century Babylonia was no longer propitious for the growth of social and religious dissent as it was in earlier generations. Times had

⁶² For this latter point cf. Talmon's stimulating inquiry into "The Calendar Reckoning of the Sect from the Judaeen Desert," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Scripta Hierosolymitana, IV [1958])*, 162–99. Why Mishawayh deviated from that archaic calendary pattern in preferring Thursday (to the *Jubilees'* Wednesday) for the annual occurrence of Passover, so that the Day of Atonement be regularly observed on a Saturday (instead of the *Jubilees'* Friday), is a problem worth looking into, but of no real consequence to the present story. Whatever the divergence in *detail*, there can be no question as to the *basic structure* of the calendar Mishawayh considered right. The *literary* antecedents of Mishawayh's doctrine are undoubtedly to be sought in the sectarian works of the Second Commonwealth era.

How these sources came to inspire a ninth-century Mishawayh into reviving the archaic calendary policies of the Dead Sea sect is a matter for speculation. I leave it to my good friend and colleague, Doctor Talmon, to pursue further the marginal suggestion he has made recently (*op. cit.*, 194, note 82) concerning the possible literary-historical link between the ancient doctrine and this medieval heresiarch. Talmon is inclined to view the Mishawite doctrine in the context of the late eighth-century discovery of Cave Writings near the Dead Sea (see above, 20, and 254, note 10), which [he believes] had given impetus to a renewal of the ancient calendar controversy in Jewry,

⁶³ Cf. Kırkisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 58; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 390. Hadassī (or the Hebrew translator who preceded him) misunderstood the passage to mean (*Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98): מורה עור ואומר לחברו בי עיון זהובים בימי: קדש מותר בהטבת ורצון הלב XXXIV (1897), 165, note 1. (See also above, 374, end of note 44.)

changed. After a hundred and fifty years of schismatic experience, Rabbinic Babylonia mended her fences and closed the ranks. Dissident activity could by now exert only negligible influence on the Babylonian Rabbanite camp proper; it would mainly spend itself on *intra*-sectarian bickerings. Conversely, the sectaries of Babylonia had now come under the impact of an infinitely more powerful Rabbinic uniformity. Willingly or not, they had to learn how to conform, especially on such decisive issues as calendation. Some, in fact, would gradually lose their identity.

The fate of the Mishawites in Babylonia and their submission to the Rabbanite calendary computation were not at all surprising, then. They simply manifested a situation in which the heresiarch unambiguously rejected *both* systems of lunar calendation, the precalculated tables of the normative majority and the lunar eye-witnessing method of the whole sectarian camp combined. At the same time, he was unable under the prevailing conditions to apply in practice his own solar calendar. A minority within a minority, Mishawayh continued to voice his doctrinal dissent as persistently as he dared to. Yet, for all practical purposes, he preferred to join the intrinsically more comfortable lunar calendar of the Rabbanite majority rather than to involve his followers in the unwieldy intricacies of the other sectaries' moon-sighting. In so doing, Mishawayh may have been not only resigning himself to what he believed was the lesser evil, but also hoping to win for his flock the goodwill of the ruling Rabbinic circles.⁶⁴

THE 'BABYLONIAN EXODUS'

Mishawayh's behavior, we said, was not surprising; indeed, it was not

Mishawayh's oscillation between theoretical preferences and a practical performance that was polarly different from the theory made a mocking *Ḳirḳisānī* present him as a man "lost in perplexity." To a modern observer, on the other hand, Mishawayh appeared, for the same reason, "to have been something of a cynic" (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, xix, 335, note I/19). But neither label *explains* the matter. True, Mishawayh may have turned cynical in a society which cared little about one's unorthodox beliefs as long as one mechanically conformed on externals of daily (especially calendary) practice. Yet, he was neither wavering nor perplexed. He had very definite ideas on what the Jewish calendar should be like. Moreover, unlike the Shi'ites who, shielded by the convenient theory of *taḳiyyah* (i.e., caution; cf. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islām*, 214 f.), kept their rebellious doctrines to themselves for fear of persecution, Mishawayh did not hesitate to speak up and make his *ideas* (save for the morning-to-morning count of days) known to all. These ideas, however, were so diametrically opposed to all that had become a matter of general consent to Jewry as a whole, normative and sectarian alike, that a *practical application* of them in ninth- and tenth-century Babylonia was simply unthinkable.

⁶⁴ Indeed, the Karaites taunted their Rabbanite neighbors for compromising with other sectaries on major issues of belief in return for the sectaries' adherence to the

even unusual. Also the far stronger and better established Karaites, we remember, had surrendered in Babylonia a vital part of their original calendar doctrine, the *abib*. To the extent that they chose to stay in the country, they would follow their Rabbanite neighbors in determining the beginning of calendar-years and intercalation by means of computation.⁶⁵ Only those segments of the dissident camp which, appraising correctly the changed (ninth-century) situation, were ready to draw the extreme conclusion were saved for further sectarian creativity. That conclusion was: Exodus from Babylonia into the Syro-Palestinian expanse and into the adjoining regions in the South (Egypt) and in the North (as far as Armenia).⁶⁶

Out of the reach of the uniformitarian machine of Babylonia's central Jewish institutions, the emigrant movements opened a new (non-Babylonian) Golden Age of Jewish sectarianism. This Golden Age of anti-talmudic dissent in the Palestinian-led countries of the East Mediterranean littoral was partly assisted by the demographic heterogeneity and the multiplicity of religious denominations in that area in general.

Rabbanite calendar. A good illustration of the case is the story of Rabbanite-'Isūnian relations. When Ẕirkīšānī asked Jacob ben Ephraim, a Rabbanite visitor from Syria (ash-Shāmī), why the Rabbanites favored the 'Isūnians and intermarried with them (in Damascus), although "Abū 'Isā acknowledged the prophecy of Jesus son of Mary and of [Muḥammad] the master of the Muslims," Jacob replied: "Because they do not differ from us in the observance of holidays." "This answer of his indicates [Ẕirkīšānī concluded bitterly] that, according to the Rabbanites, ['Isūnian] manifestation of unbelief is more pardonable than the [Karaites] display of differences in the observance of holidays which they [i.e., the Rabbanites] themselves invented." Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 52; Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII [1930], 382.

Incidentally, if we are to believe Hadassī (*Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 41c, Alphabet 97; see the quotation above, 274, note 62), the 'Isūnians, too, advocated a solar year. Unlike the Mishawite story, a practical application of the solar system was possible in the time of the seventh-century Abū 'Isā, when Babylonian Rabbinism had not yet attained the standing it enjoyed in Mishawayh's days. In the ninth century, however, the 'Isūnians may have undergone the same development which is suggested here for the Mishawites: Under the impact of Rabbinic uniformity they may have surrendered their solar calendar (if they ever had put it into practice). Like the Mishawites, too, the 'Isūnians continued to adhere to the Rabbanite calendar even after they had emigrated to Syria. The problem merits further study. At any rate, in the light of Ẕirkīšānī's report, one cannot accept Hadassī's statement that the 'Isūnians "observe [חושבים] the holidays according to a solar calendar of years." If there were any 'Isūnians left in the twelfth century, when Hadassī wrote his *Eshkol*, they surely followed the Rabbinic calendar, as did their tenth-century predecessors in the time of Ẕirkīšānī.

⁶⁵ See above, 303 ff., 314 ff.

⁶⁶ A broader statement and documentation of the "Exodus-thesis" expounded here will be found in my forthcoming Hebrew paper, "The 'Babylonian Exodus' of Jewish Sects in the Period of the Geonim."

It was further encouraged by the progressive disintegration of the central power of the ('Abbāsīd) Caliphate, the mainstay of Babylonian Jewish centralism.⁶⁷ Yet, last but not least, it was spurred by the greatest institutional struggle eastern Jewry had known in the High Middle Ages: the already referred-to Palestine-versus-Babylonia contest.

The Syro-Palestinian Jewish society itself—the Rabbanite majority of it, that is—was at that time no less embattled against the centralistic claims of Rabbinic Babylonia than were the sectarian groupings. Itself unwilling to bow to the dictate of the rival (Rabbanite) institutions of Babylonia, yet possessing neither the political standing nor the executive power to erase by its own means the heresies from its midst, Palestinian-oriented Rabbinism could not help but come to terms with reality.⁶⁸ Thus it happened that, precisely at the time when they were effectively halted in Babylonia, the tenth-century sectaries attained for a while in certain parts of Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and in the adjacent provinces later incorporated in the Byzantine Empire a standing which was almost equal to that of Rabbinic Jewry.

Similar to Tiflisites, to 'Isūnians and to the Karaites of the al-Ḳūmīsī school, Mishawite activists, too, must have left, then, Babylonia a generation or so after the death of their Founding Father.⁶⁹ It is from this point

⁶⁷ Thus, the independence of Egypt and of Syria (including Palestine) from the 'Abbāsīd rule in the time of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn provided Karaism with a unique opportunity of consolidating its newly established Palestinian center. Cf. above, 23. Even more propitious was the situation in the later tenth and in the eleventh centuries.

⁶⁸ Thus, the Palestinian gaon, Aaron ben Meir, is known to have traveled to Babylonia in an attempt to enlist political and other aid for his struggle against the Karaites in Palestine. Soon, however, he himself was embroiled in a decisive contest with Babylonian Rabbinism. Thereafter, all through the tenth and, especially, the eleventh centuries, Karaite participation in the internal affairs of Palestinian *Rabbinism* was viewed as a matter of course. Cf. above, 42 ff.

⁶⁹ The exact time of that migration cannot be fixed with certainty. If it should prove true that Tobias ben Moses found a great part of his anti-Mishawite argumentation in the commentaries of the Palestinian Yefeth ben 'Alī, we shall have been given an approximate *terminus ad quem* for the completion of the process: the middle of the tenth century. When Yefeth began his career, some time in the second half of that century (he reported, we remember, on the conquests of Nicephor which had taken place in the late 960's), the Mishawites' calendar practice in their new abode was already a well-established fact.

On the other hand, there is no need to consider the year 937 (when Ḳırķīsānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār* was composed) as the *terminus a quo* for the Mishawite migration. Ḳırķīsānī had no information on sectarian developments in Syria. Thus he did not report, for instance, on the eighth-century Syrian movement of Severus-Sarini. Nor did he care to mention even the migration of al-Ḳūmīsī and his followers to Palestine, although he devoted considerable space to this leader. His report on the 'Isūnians of Damascus was plainly the result of his conversation with Jacob ben Ephraim of Syria. Hence, some Mishawites may already have moved to Syria at the end of the

on that Mishawism underwent a development largely parallel to the vicissitudes of Karaism in the area.⁷⁰ While some Mishawites, like some of their Karaite neighbors, preferred to stay in Babylonia—their existence in 'Ukbara about 937 C.E. was reliably reported to Ẕirkīšānī by a local elder⁷¹—others, again like the Karaites, apparently moved to Syria. Their concentration in the Ba'albek region was undoubtedly responsible for the by-name *Ba'albekī* which came to be appended to the sect's traditional appellation. So much so, indeed, that, after a time, the by-name was projected back into the life story of Mishawayh himself: he would be referred to in Byzantine Karaite texts as Mishawayh *al-Ba'albekī* rather than (or simultaneously with his earlier by-name) *al-'Ukbarī*.⁷²

THE SYRO-BYZANTINE DEVELOPMENT

Unlike Babylonia, where a practical application of the solar calendar was in the ninth and tenth centuries flatly unthinkable, Syria proved a

ninth century. It may be surmised, however, that the calendary heresy became more widely known and evoked literary refutations only *after* the generation of Saadyah and Ẕirkīšānī.

⁷⁰ See on this my *Mishawiyyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*.

⁷¹ *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 14 (cf. 57: فاخبرني بعض مشائخ الكباريين); Eng. tr. by Nemoy, *HUCA*, VII (1930), 330 and 389, and *Karaite Anthology*, 53.

⁷² Such is my explanation of the synonymy of these two by-names as apparent in Byzantine Karaite texts. Earlier, Poznański suggested that Mishawayh was born in Ba'albek (hence his by-name *al-Ba'albekī*) and emigrated to 'Ukbara in Babylonia, where he came to be known as *al-'Ukbarī*. Cf. *REJ*, XXXIV (1897), 162 f. This view, espoused by Mahler, *Hak-Ḳara'im*, 198, reflects, of course, Poznański's concept of the respective roles of Babylonia and Syria in the sect-forming process in medieval Jewry. See on this below, 384, note 73. Whatever the case, the Byzantine Karaites considered the two by-names synonymous and used them interchangeably.

Thus, when incorporating into *Oṣar Neḥmad* Ẕirkīšānī's and Saadyah's discussion of Mishawite dietary laws, Tobias ben Moses applied to Mishawayh the agnomen *'Ukbarī* (cf. below, 389 ff., notes 91, 96–98). He undoubtedly copied it from these Babylonian sources at his disposal. When, however, in the same commentary, Tobias felt called upon to refute the Mishawite calendary practice prevalent in Byzantium (but unknown in Babylonia), he referred to Mishawayh as *al-Ba'albekī* (see, e.g., below, 401). In so doing, Tobias no doubt followed contemporaneous Byzantine usage. Yet, confident that both by-names alike pointed to the same person, Tobias combined his reports on *'Ukbarī* and *Ba'albekī* by means of cross-references from one section to the other (cf., e.g., above, 375, note 48).

This referential merger is even more complete in Hadassī's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*. The passage in Hadassī, we remember, is an abridged Hebrew version of the Arabic report by Ẕirkīšānī on Mishawayh—Mishawayh *al-'Ukbarī*, that is. By his own admission, however, Hadassī had in mind the Mishawites of his own time and country. These were linked in Byzantium to Mishawayh *al-Ba'albekī*. Hence, as a matter of course, all that Ẕirkīšānī had originally to say of Mishawayh *al-'Ukbarī* was in Hadassī's

more inviting ground for Mishawite radicalism.⁷³ Though ostracized generally, as should have been expected,⁷⁴ the Mishawites not only persisted on the margin of the Palestino-Syrian Jewish community but reached out even farther West. Yet, when the purely theoretical calendary teachings of Mishawayh were transplanted from Babylonia to Syria and put to practice there, a curious amalgam arose. This phenomenon is one of the paradoxes which are not unusual in the history of religion.

On the one hand, the practical adherence of Mishawism to the *Rabbanite* calendar of festivals, once a matter of sheer expediency, was not abandoned even under the changed conditions. This development may have been caused by the fact that such adherence had in the meantime become sanctified by tradition. It may further have been brought about by the realization that the espousal of a completely different calendary structure of solar years would play havoc with the social and economic life of the Mishawite community. Be that as it may, observance of a pre-calculated calendar jointly with the Rabbanites—computations, intercalations, and occasional postponements of festivals not excluded—was by now a permanent feature of the Mishawite code of behavior. It was binding in eleventh-century Byzantium no less than in ninth-century Babylonia.⁷⁵ This situation must be remembered when the intensity of

Byzantine transcription laid at the door of Mishawayh *al-Ba'albeki*. Cf. his *Eshkol*, 42a (top), Alphabet 98 (and see above, 374, end of note 44).

A converse, yet no less instructive, case is that of Aaron ben Elijah. Two hundred years after Hadassī, Aaron excerpted Tobias' refutation of the Mishawite view on thankofferings. In Tobias' original excursus Mishawayh was naturally referred to as *Ba'albeki* (cf. below, 401, note 132), according to the early Byzantine tradition. Yet, when reporting in the fourteenth century on the eleventh-century text of Tobias, Aaron associated the heretical views, described originally as those of *Ba'albeki*, with Mishawayh *al-'Ukbari*. Cf. his *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Pesah*, 42b; *Kether Tōrah* on Numbers, 10a.

(As for the spelling of *Ba'albeki* with a *ḥ*, contrary to the Arabic usage, see, e.g., the *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela, ed. Asher, I, Hebrew Section, 48; ed. Grünhut, 44. The British Museum MS alone, underlying the Adler edition [Hebrew Section, 31], reads *בַּעַל בְּכֵי*. All the other copies spell the place-name with a *ḥ*, similar to our Bodleian MS of *Oṣar Neḥmad* and similar to Hadassī. In the present discussion I have followed, of course, the spelling preferred by the Jews of those centuries, Rabbanites and Karaites alike.)

⁷³ This view opposes Poznański, who believed that "en tout cas, ce n'est que dans l'Irāk [=Babylonia] qu'il [i.e., Mishawayh] pouvait exercer son activité religieuse, car la Syrie n'offrait pas de terrain propice pour la création de sectes." Cf. *REJ*, XXXIV (1897), 163. See above, 383, the opening paragraph of note 72.

⁷⁴ We have actual evidence of ostracism from Byzantium alone (cf. below, 387, note 87), but there can be no doubt that Syrian Jewry, too, pronounced the ban on the Mishawites who lived in its midst.

⁷⁵ See the text below, 395 (and note 108).

the Karaite struggle against Mishawism in Byzantium is compared with the somewhat equivocal attitude of their Rabbanite neighbors.

On the other hand, the Syro-Byzantine Mishawites did not hesitate any more in the new environment to make a weekly issue of their other solar principle (i.e., reckoning the days from morning to morning)—a principle which they dared not even mention explicitly in Babylonia, though it was undoubtedly part of their calendary outlook in Babylonia as well.⁷⁶ The application of that principle became from the mid-tenth century on a conspicuous recognition-mark of Mishawism, both because it was the sect's only *practical* deviation from the all-Jewish lunar calendar and because it affected the most sacrosanct institution of the Jewish order of days, the Sabbath. Hence the concentration of all later reporters on this particular feature of Mishawite dissent.

The remarkable parallelism of the Mishawite and Karaite histories—a parallelism which began, we remember, with the exodus of the Mishawite and the Karaite avant-guards from Babylonia—did not stop, however, in the middle of the tenth century. Having transferred their respective social and religious endeavor to Syro-Palestinian centers for similar reasons and roughly at the same time, the two sects could not help being equally and simultaneously subject to broader factors which governed the destinies of the region and of its populations.

KARAISM AND MISHAWISM: A HISTORICAL PARALLEL

There is no indication in the extant material what routes the Mishawites had taken when entering the Byzantine realm. Chances are, nevertheless, that they appeared within the boundaries of the Empire in a way that was not much different from that of the Karaites—indeed, simultaneously with them. Propelled by the same forces and exposed to the same circumstances that had shaped the establishment of Karaism on Byzantine soil, the Mishawites may have drifted into Asia Minor, along with the Karaites, some time in the second half of the tenth century and in later decades.⁷⁷ They hailed, just as did the Karaites, from Syrian regions—both those regions which were but temporarily occupied by Nicephor or Tzimiskes and those which were outrightly incorporated into the Empire's Eastern Themes.⁷⁸ Thus, Ba'albek itself was conquered by

⁷⁶ Cf. above, 379.

⁷⁷ Cf. above, Chapter III, esp. 102 ff.

⁷⁸ See above, 100 (and note 54).

Tzimiskes in 975,⁷⁹ in the course of that emperor's great Damascus campaign.⁸⁰

Gravitating further inland, like the Karaites, the Mishawites may have used the same southern route along the coast of Anatolia which was taken by the Karaite immigrants, passing such places as Attaleia, familiar from the earliest history of Karaite settlement in Byzantium.⁸¹ In consequence of the close ties between the Attaleian harbor and the opposite-lying Island of Cyprus⁸² (which, we recall, also contained a Karaite community),⁸³ the Mishawites may have finally found it convenient to settle on that island. Excommunicated by Rabbanites and Karaites alike and never really numerous, they must have preferred to concentrate *en force* in one isolated locality rather than scatter in small groups all over the country. This was advisable for social and economic reasons no less than for the sake of religious freedom. Only a well-consolidated community could counteract the detrimental effects of a ban in the economic and social fields.⁸⁴ At the same time, consolidation and isolation ensured the possibility of observing such a glaring calendar peculiarity as the celebration of the Sabbath from Saturday morning till Sunday morning in spite of interference by the non-Mishawite Jewish residents of the place.⁸⁵

At any rate, it was on Cyprus that the Spanish Jewish traveler found the Mishawites in the second half of the twelfth century.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Cf. Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches* [=Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, III], 99, 102, 107; Vasiliev, in *Cambridge Med. History*, IV, 148.

⁸⁰ On that campaign see above, 99 f. (and notes).

⁸¹ See above, 47, 108 ff., 119 f., 171.

⁸² See the references above, 119, note 111.

⁸³ See above, 119 f., and the quotation below, 387, note 87.

⁸⁴ This consideration has already been stressed earlier, 54 ff. (and notes), when discussing the premises on which our understanding of Karaite history must be based. Our observations there apply (with, perhaps, greater vigor) to the history of the Mishawites as well or, for that matter, to the history of any other medieval Jewish sect.

⁸⁵ For that interference see the passage from Benjamin of Tudela, to be quoted presently.

⁸⁶ To be sure, Benjamin was by no means explicit about details of the sectaries' doctrine (except for their conspicuous calendar deviation) or even about their name. As for the latter, Rappaport believed (in a comment to Asher's edition, II, 56 f., No. 119) that Benjamin punned here on the epithet *Kafrōsin* (=Cypriots) by calling the heretics *Epikōrōsin*, which was the usual Jewish term for "atheists."

Whatever the case, there can be no doubt that the Mishawites are meant. Both Benjamin, the twelfth-century Rabbanite, and Tobias ben Moses, the Karaite, a century prior to Benjamin's visit, are unanimous in decrying the most outstanding feature of the heresy: the celebration of the Sabbath from Saturday morning to the morning of the next day. This practice, based on the solar principle of calendar reckoning, not only

no escape from the notion that Tobias' clash with Mishawism was only partly directed against Mishawism itself and only mildly interested in Mishawism's reaction. Rather, paradoxically perhaps, its primary target were the *Rabbanites*. While fighting the Mishawites, Tobias addressed himself actually to his *Rabbanite* neighbors—with a bid for their trust, with a desperate plea for correct identification, with a reproachful rejection of their willful misrepresentations, and with an invitation to partnership in combatting the others.

For a task of paramount importance to the young Karaite community in Byzantium was to make its precise identity known throughout the sect-ridden Empire and to establish its prestige accordingly. Not exactly newcomers in the time of Tobias ben Moses, the Karaites could boast only of a relatively short history (of two or three generations) on the ancient Byzantine Jewish scene. Taunted, as we remember, for their "foreignness" as late as the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century,⁸⁸ they ran the risk of being confused—deliberately or unwittingly, as the case may be—with the other Jewish sectaries who had settled simultaneously with them on Byzantine soil. It, therefore, seemed to the Karaite leadership in Byzantium a matter of absolute necessity to make the Karaite position known as clearly and as widely as possible. Clarity on basic issues would fend off in the new locale any accidental or calculated identification of Karaism with the other sectarian shade.⁸⁹

This clarification was achieved, first of all, by stressing the positive program of the Karaite movement; here, again, the role of the rising Byzantine Karaite literature in the Hebrew language becomes apparent. But, in addition to that, the Karaites made a special effort to show how relentlessly they opposed the other sect's deviations from laws and customs which constituted the *common* lore of the Jewish people. This sentiment was accentuated, as it universally happens, through a display of extreme impatience with the other sect's unorthodox practices—indeed, impatience more fanatical than the normative majority itself ever cared to stage. It was followed, further, by vocal ostentations of Karaism's own piety as against the alleged Mishawite laxity in matters ritual and religious. It was then, finally, sealed by deprecation of the ninth-century heresiarch himself, derision of his supposed ignorance and, last but not least, none-too-savory name-calling.

⁸⁸ See the discussion of Rabbanite accusations, cited earlier in this chapter, 363 f. (and notes 20–21).

⁸⁹ See below, 389 f., 391 ff., 394 f.

To be sure, the Karaite fears of confusion of identity were by no means unfounded. A Rabbanite tendency to lump together the Mishawites and the Karaites, and to accuse the latter of sharing certain objectionable practices with the Mishawites, was already manifest in the East as early as the beginning of the tenth century.⁹⁰ At that time, we remember, the *practical* deviation of Mishawism from orthodoxy in Babylonia was limited to the field of dietary laws—the Mishawites permitting the consumption of certain fats on the ground that only the fat of Temple sacrifices was prohibited.⁹¹ No practical calendary nonconformism was as yet in the offing.⁹²

THE SAADYAN PRECEDENT

An illustration of such Rabbanite attempts to blur deliberately the respective identities of Mishawism and Karaism is offered by the Saadyan critique of Karaite dietary laws (concerning Karaism's prohibition of the fat-tail, etc.).⁹³ Without mentioning the Mishawites by name, Saadyah Gaon has cleverly intertwined with his anti-Karaite arguments a "hearsay information," according to which there were some in the [Jewish] nation who permitted [partaking of] fats in our time....

⁹⁰ This has already been noted by Poznański, "Meswi al-Okbari," *REJ*, XXXIV (1897), 164.

⁹¹ Cf. Ẕirḳisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 57 (= *HUCA*, VII [1930], 389), and esp. V, 1204 ff. Cf. further the hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad* of Tobias ben Moses in Byzantium, Bodl. MS No. 290, 84a: *יח"ש אסר לנו באש' אמי' (ויק' ג' יז) כל חלב וכל דם לא תאכלו. ואמי' (ויק' ז' כג) כל חלב שור וכשב ועז לא תאכלו. אלה הן החלקים מן הבקר והעז. והן מן הכשבים אין פרק [=הברל] בנה להיות מן הקרבן ובין להיות ממה שאינו קרבן. והב' דברי הרבנ' כי י"י יח"ש אסר עלינו באלה ב' הרב' יע' [ני] כל חלב וכל דם וכל שור וכשב. החלב המכסה את הקרב. וחלב אש' על הקרב. וחלב אש' על הכליות. ולא יאסר מאלה ב' הפסוקים הכליות ויותרת הכבד והאליה. והג' הם דברי משוי העכברי ואש' ירמחו כי י"י יח"ש אסר באלה ב' הפסוק' ה' החלקים מן הכבשים וה' מן הבקר והעז המוקרבים, ואינם אסורים מן הבקר והעז אש' אינם נקרבים והם החלקים מן הכשבים וזוהי חליהם. הנקראים זבחי חלים* Tobias refutes the Mishawite view, showing that the Scripture could not have intended to make a distinction between the two categories. He winds up that point by saying (85a): *כאש' טען (85a): חייב להיות שוים ב' החלקים כאש' אמרנו. ובטלו מהיותם מחולפים. כאש' טען* (85a): *אמר מחליפנו בלא ראייה*. The discussions by Ẕirḳisānī and Tobias underlie all the later presentations of the problem in Byzantine Karaite literature. Cf., for instance, Aaron ben Elijah, *Gan 'Eden*, Section *Sheḥiṭah*, Chps. XIX–XX, 94a ff.; Elijah Bashyachi, *Addereth Eliyahū*, Section *Sheḥiṭah*, Ch. XVIII, 117d ff. See above, 372 f. (and note 40).

The brief notice by Ẕirḳisānī, in *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 57, appears also in the Hebrew summary of Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98.

⁹² Cf. above, 379 ff., 383.

⁹³ After having devoted some 30 pages (from 83b) to a refutation of several points in Saadyah's critique of Karaite dietary legislation, Tobias passes (on 99b) to the Mishawite argument advanced by the gaon. But first he condemns Saadyah's evil scheme in bringing in the Mishawite view while combatting the Karaites: *שחפץ ובקש זה הפיתומי לסעון ולערער ריב ומדון על דברי בע לי מק [רא] באסור הכליות והאליה. זה הפיתומי לסעון ולערער ריב ומדון על דברי בע לי מק [רא] באסור הכליות והאליה. זה הפיתומי לסעון ולערער ריב ומדון על דברי בע לי מק [רא] באסור הכליות והאליה. זה הפיתומי לסעון ולערער ריב ומדון על דברי בע לי מק [רא] באסור הכליות והאליה.* (Bodl. MS No. 290, end of 99a).

Now [adds Saadyah], I do not know whether or not there is any difference between those who [regularly] oppose our teachings [=the Karaites] and these [other] dissenters.⁹⁴

Tobias was quick to take up the challenge. His refutation of Saadyah is more thorough and comprehensive than anything else that had been written on the subject by the Karaites⁹⁵—and, obviously, not without reason. Even though more than a century has elapsed since the gaon's death and even though the Byzantine Karaites were out of the reach of the Babylonian Rabbinic institutions (themselves, by then, already past their glory), Saadyah's innuendo was still a powerful weapon against Karaism. The Saadyan Commentary on Leviticus, which included the above anti-Karaite critique on the subject of fats, was, apparently, widely circulated in Byzantium.

First of all, then, Tobias considered it imperative to make the identity of "the other dissenters" clear beyond any doubt, so that they would not be confused with his own flock.

Know ye, my brethren [Tobias opens his refutation], that this frivolous Pithomite [i.e., Saadyah of Fayyūm] was referring to the pronouncements of Mishawayh al-'Ukbarī and of those who had followed the latter in permitting fats of non-offerable animals.⁹⁶

Openly accusing Saadyah of dishonesty, half-truths, and "intention to seduce the fools and the ignorant,"⁹⁷ Tobias proceeded to deliver a powerful piece of defense of Karaism by way of an offensive: How dare

⁹⁴ Just a few lines of the following texts had so far been cited by Steinschneider (in his *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, 2168 f.) and by Poznański (*REJ*, XXXIV [1897], 164, note 6, and *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadyah*, 64, note 1). In the present note, as well as in notes 96–98, fuller quotations are given for the first time. They are reproduced from the Bodleian MS No. 290, 99b–101a. (There is a difference of two folios between the pagination cited by Steinschneider and Poznański [101b] and my own page-numbering [99b]. The reason for this disparity is unknown to me. I have followed the page-numbers pencilled on the inner margin of the MS.)

Tobias opens his tirade with a quotation from Saadyah. Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 99b: ואחר כך אמר הפיחומי . . . ושמשנו כי אנשים היו בתוך האמה מתידים החלבים בדרגו. ואמ' כי יז' ית"ש אמ' (ויק' ז' כה) כי כל אכל חלב מן הבהמה אש' יקריב ממנה [אשה לז'י ונכרתה הנפש האכלת מעמיה]. ואלה הבהמות נקריב מהם כבר. אמרו וכן היה הדרך בזמן שהמקדש קיים כי הראש אש' היה יקריב לז'י חלבו אסור ואש' אינו נקרב חלבו מותר. ולא ידעתי כי יש פרק בין המחליפים לנו וביניהם אם ילכו עמנו אחר ההקש אלא אם ישוּבו ויטו אחר הירושה והעסקה שא' כי כן פתר לנו הנביא. ואם הם ישוּבו אל זה חוב להם שישוּבו אל זולתו מן הפתרונים אש' העתקנו.

⁹⁵ Cf. Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadyah*, 64. See more on it above, 260, note 28, and 287 f., esp. note 105.

⁹⁶ Bodl. MS No. 290, 99b: דעו אחי כי זה הפיחומי הלך זכר דברי מישוי אלעכברי ואשר הלכו: אחריו בהתרת חלבי חלים

⁹⁷ Bodl. MS No. 290, 99b–100b: זכר [=טעויה] טעוניהם וחזק דבריהם ולא ביאר מן קלות ראשו ומיעוט דעתו שיחית דבריהם ולא נלה הבטלח טעוניהם ולא הראה כי פת' [רון] הפסוק כי כל אוכל חלב אש' פתר הוא טוב מפתרונם. והיה מדרך החוב עליו מאשר זכר דבריהם אש' הם מחליפים לדבריהם [=של הרבנים; או צ"ל: לדברינו] שיגלה ויבאר הבטלח ושיחיתם או לא היה יזכר אותם אחר

the Rabbanites hurl such utterly preposterous accusations of Karaite affinity with Mishawism, when the exact opposite was true?! Why, while the Karaites display the most meticulous care in observing the biblical prohibition of *all* fats, it is precisely the Rabbanites who, similar to Mishawayh and "his sages and priests," allow the partaking of *certain* categories of fats. Thus, it is rather

he [=Saadyah] and the members of the Academic Circle that are eligible for comparison with Mishawayh al-'Ukbari, for they have erred and misled others much the same as he [i.e., Mishawayh] had erred and caused others to err.⁹⁸

DANGEROUS INNUENDO

The system of innuendo, imputing to Karaism Mishawite doctrines that were actually objectionable to it, must have become even more dangerous later, when Mishawism's calendary heresy had revealed itself in practice and had created a considerable stir in the Jewish community. This development, we recall, had occurred still in the East, but outside of

שלא היה לו כח לבטלם אם מפני מיעוט דעתו למצות י"י אם מפני זולתו. ואולי חפץ שיפתה לזה לכסילים ואנשים בערים כמזהו, קלי ריעה מיעוטי חכמה, ולהראות להולכים אחר תעיותיו ושקריותו ובזבותיו, החולכים בעורים באפלה, כי הוא נתן דברי מישוי העכברי באשר זכר מסת' [ירון] פסו' כי כל אובל חלב. ואם לא יבאר כי הוא לברו פתרונו. יע' [ג] כי זה הפת' הוא לברו ולא זולתו ולא יתכן מה שפתר בו משוי העכברי כל עקר. וזהו אש' לא יתכן אצלי [צ"ל: אצל] מי שיש לו אונים לשמע ולב לרעת [לשמר] ולהבין דברי הפיתומי הריקים. או אולי חפץ להראותם כי הוא כלומ' [הפיתומי] השיב ובטל דבריהם באמ' לא ארע בין המחליטים לנו [=הקראים] ובין מי שהתיר חלבי חלים פרק אם ילכו ממנו אחר ההקש. אלא אם ישובו ויטו אל פתרון בי כן פתר הנביא, יע' [ג] אם לא נשוב אל דברי מי שנקרם מן חכמיהם. אש' יאמ' בי ההעתקה מן הנביא ע"ה. ואם היה הפצו זה לא מצא חפצו. . . [100a]. . . ולא יחייב משוי העכברי דבר מאש' חפץ ובקש [סעדיה] לחייב לנו. בי משוי העכברי התיר אש' לא יוכל זה הפיתומי למנוע אותו מהיות חלבים. . . למען כי הכליות והאליה מותרים בפת' הנביא על דברי מישוי העכברי זה הם מותרים. ואם חשב זה האיש הפיתומי כי מה שבקש להשיב עלינו יחייב גם למישוי העכברי כבר חשב מה שאין לו די בשיותו. . . וכל שבן כי הגבל לא ירע כי הרבה מן חכמי תושיה שהם בעלי מקרא אסורים חלב שבעה בהמת של שרה שא' (רב' י"ד ה) איל רצבי ויחמור [ואקו ורשן ותאו וזמר]. ואיך פתח פיו לומר כי אם ילכו ממנו אחר ההקש יחייב עליהם מה שאמ' מישוי העכברי אם לא ישובו ויטו על ההעתקה והלא יפתח פיו לאולת ברבר שלא ירע ומחייב עליהם מה שלא מחייב עליהם וישיב על דת אש' לא ידע. והלא זה אינו אלא מעשה כסילים ובערים ועליו אמ' שלמה ע"ה (משלי י"ז בח) גם אויל מחזיש חכם יחשב. כי היה לו שם מן בעלי תורה ומאש' יראו קושותיו הפחותים יתבזה לעיניהם ויקל ויראה נפשו כי הוא קל דעת ומיעוט חכמה במצוות י"י. . . כי אמר ב' [ז' צ"ל: בו, או: בנו] אין פרק בינינו לביניהם [=לבין המישוים] אם יבואו [ו] עמנו בדרך הקש. וזה ממנו כזב ושקר גלוי למען כי אנו [אינו?] בהקש כל עקר באסור החלבים. וגם לא יאמ' משוי העכברי ולא זכר זה הפיתומי כאש' אמ' בעבורנו ובעבורם. ומי שמאן למצוא עזרה ברתו והשבה על דת המחליטים לו על השקר יע' מי שימאן על השקר למען לקחת רתו ויכטל דת המחליף לו בבר מאן אל רבר להקל מן המחליפים לו והסיל [100b] מעליהם ובטל המדיבה מלרבר עמו ונשא ונתן בדברי התורה. אבל דברי מישוי ואנשיו האומ' בי החלב האסור הוא חלב הבקר והצאן המוקרב, זולת חלב חולים

כי מישוי העכברי אש' התיר החלבים האסורים דומה לו הוא [סעדיה]: Bodl. MS No. 290, 100a: 98
 וחכמו וכמרו אש' תעו והתעו והם קרובים יותר מכל העו' [לם] להיות דומים לו כי הם התיירו מקצת החלבים האסורים. ובע' [לי] מק' [רא] אש' יאסרו כלל החלבים מן החלים אש' חפץ י"י באסורם. בא' [מרו] כל חלב שור וכשב ועז. איך יהיו שוים למישוי העכברי אש' התיר החלבים. והלא הוא ואנשי גרן העגולה יתרים The same is implied later in the manuscript, 112a: וערופים להיות דומים למישוי העכברי כי הם תעו והתעו כמ' [ו] שחעה הוא והתעה והשכנו על זה הקשיא. ואמרנו כי מוליק למשוי העכברי וה דומ' : לו מן הרבני ם

Babylonia. It became known to wider circles subsequent only to the generation of a Saadyah and a Ẕirḳisānī. It apparently reached its full bloom in the Byzantine Empire.

A confusion of identity could have had by then grave repercussions indeed, owing to the fact that the Mishawite calendar peculiarity was interpreted by many as reflecting kinship with Christianity. The attribution of allegedly "christianizing" tendencies to the Karaites by not-too-well informed or biased Rabbanite vigilantes might, especially in a Christian state, cast a slur on the religio-national partnership of Karaism with the main body of the Jewish people.

A situation of this sort must have seemed to the Byzantine Karaites utterly intolerable, both on ideological and on practical grounds. For, as disciples of the Jerusalem "Mourners of Zion," they believed they were the exponents of the most unadulterated brand of Jewish nationalism. Convinced that it was they, and not the Rabbanites, who were serving as the true guardians of the Revealed Word,⁹⁹ the Karaites must have genuinely resented any implication of extra-Jewish leanings and any suspicion of having subverted the historical course of Jewry and Judaism. Moreover, the Rabbanites' deliberate association of Karaism with Mishawite calendary heresy could not fail to endanger also the practical standing of the Karaites in the local Jewish community. Especially where smaller Karaite groups were involved, the threat of ostracism by the general Jewish society was as real as it was to the Mishawites on Cyprus.¹⁰⁰

As veiled as were the Rabbanites' allegations of a pro-Mishawite slant in the dietary injunctions of Karaism, even more veiled were their imputations of Karaite adherence to the solar calendar. The reason for it was obvious. Since the Rabbanites repeatedly criticized Karaite insistence on monthly eye-witnessing of the New Moon,¹⁰¹ they surely could not at the same time *openly* accuse Karaism of following the

⁹⁹ Cf., for instance, the confrontation of the schools in Judaism, as presented by Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 10b, second introductory Alphabet: ויגשו אלה למול אלה לקרבות: ונכשלו מרשיעך [=הרבנים] ביד משכילך [=הקראים] לפני עמים בשוקים וברחובות: ומשכילי עם יבינו לרבים ועם יודעי אלהים יחזיקו ויעשו כחורתך: זכרו צורם ושכר גואלם: זממו לעלות בעיר הקדש לבכות ולהתודות במעלם: זכרו והתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותיך: ... חשו לקיים על חומותיך ירושלם היש [=הפקדתי שומרים] כל היום ולילותיך: טוב עולם זה הגיחו וחמדתם: טפס ונשיהם ומשפחתם: לבכות etc., etc., in the same vein. Cf. also above, 36 f., notes 27–28.

¹⁰⁰ As already noted above, 55 f. (and note 75), such ostracism and persecution were by no means unusual in the history of the Karaite minority. Even powerful communities, such as, e.g., that of Jerusalem, bore the annually recurring brunt of Rabbanite excommunication. Cf. above, 41 f., and note 38.

¹⁰¹ See the texts and discussions above, 269 ff.

Mishawites' solar system.¹⁰² Hence, as far as the literary material goes, nowhere in the anti-Karaite publications of Byzantine Rabbinism were the Karaites specifically brought to task for advocating, in the Mishawite fashion, a 364-day solar year or regular thirty-day solar months. The farthest Tobias ben Eliezer, the oft-quoted leader of the Empire's Rabbanites in the time of the First Crusade, would go was to blur the difference between the two heterodoxies, as did Saadyah, and let "the fools and the ignorant" draw their own conclusions. He simply refrained from specifying the identity of those whom he sharply condemned for "counting all months as thirty-day units."

It is not the manner of people of understanding [says the Rabbanite leader of Castoria and Thessalonica] to count all months as thirty-day units. Now, those who do follow this procedure out of wickedness show no consideration for the honor of their Maker. It is of such men that the Prophet Jeremiah used to say, "Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard" [Jer. 12:10]. [And he said further,] "Their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains, from mountain to hill" [Jer. 50:6]. [And again he said,] "They walked in their own counsels, even in the stubbornness of their evil heart" [Jer. 7:24].¹⁰³

Indeed, while discussing earlier in this volume Tobias ben Eliezer's general campaign against Karaism, I drew attention to this particular passage. I suggested then that the Rabbanite protagonist may have acted deliberately. He intended to exploit the widespread anti-Mishawite sentiment, caused by the Mishawites' desecration of the Sabbath, and to turn its edge against his much more dangerous Karaite opponents, hoping to take advantage of the possible confusion of identity. Thus, Tobias has intertwined his anonymous censure of the solar calendar

¹⁰² An illustration of the fact that mutually contradicting accusations were tossed indiscriminately at the Karaites is offered in the already quoted responsum of Maimonides (see above, 256, note 19). Notwithstanding the relentless war which the Karaites were waging against the Rabbinic anthropomorphic Midrashim of the *Shi'ur Qomah* type, they themselves would not escape the accusation of anthropomorphism. Thus, on the one hand, Rabbanite spokesmen, such as Tobias ben Eliezer of Castoria, who were favorably inclined to this sort of compositions, had a difficult time warding off the attacks of Karaite rationalists. On the other hand, rationalists in the Rabbanite camp unscrupulously pinned on the Karaites the authorship of these very Midrashim!

The task of the accusers was much easier in the case of Sabbath eve. Though no explicit evidence is available, one can easily imagine how the darkness in Karaite homes on Friday evenings might be misrepresented by unscrupulous controversialists. Compared with the gaily lit home of the Rabbanite, the Karaite's peculiar way of celebrating the Sabbath eve in gloomy mourning could be interpreted as no celebration at all—indeed, as a desecration of the Sabbath. Cf. the texts above, 267 f., notes 44 and 45. There was only one step from such misinterpretation to the lumping of Karaites and Mishawites together and accusing the former of the Sabbath heresy characteristic of Mishawism alone.

¹⁰³ See the Hebrew text from Tobias' *Leqah Tōb* on Leviticus, above, 273, note 59.

with a denouncement of Karaism's general calendary policies and has phrased this censure in the passionate, urgent words which, as a rule, he would reserve for anti-Karaite utterances (the latter likewise largely anonymous!).¹⁰⁴

Be that as it may, the threat to Karaism was real. Even the aforementioned Saadyan misrepresentation of Karaite dietary laws, which, as we have seen, persisted in Byzantium well into the eleventh century, must have become now doubly menacing. For Mishawism at large was by now synonymous with that which all Jewry considered a profanation of the Sabbath. Consequently, the ascription to Karaism of *any* Mishawite doctrine—not necessarily one that involved the calendar explicitly—was sure to evoke ominous *calendary* associations as well. It thereby helped direct against the local *Karaites* a great deal of that popular animosity which originally was generated against the local *Mishawites* on grounds of the latter's calendar heresy.

Byzantine Karaism was, therefore, called upon to react vigorously: to dissociate itself most emphatically from *any* Mishawite practices pinned on it by non-discriminating or unscrupulous Rabbanite controversialists; to seize the initiative especially in the anti-Mishawite *calendar* discussion that was going on in Byzantium; and, finally, to stress Karaite-Rabbanite community of purpose and outlook against the penetration of Mishawite heresy into the ranks of Byzantine Jewry.

REFUTING SOLAR CALENDATION

The initial task, again, was to make the true identity of the protagonists of the solar day count clear beyond a shadow of doubt; Karaism's self-evident opposition to them would then be brought into the sharpest relief possible. Hence, Tobias ben Moses, the spokesman of eleventh-century Karaism in Constantinople, opens the calendar case in much the same emphatic vein as he did his exposition of dietary laws, i.e., by clarifying the *Mishawite* identity of those who follow solar calendation:¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cf. above, 273 ff.

¹⁰⁵ The texts which follow belong to the fragment of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* which was published by Poznański in *REJ*, XXXIV (1897), 181–91. I have compared the printed version with Bodl. MS No. 290 and found only few misreadings or questionable restorations. For easier reference, therefore, I shall quote here Poznański's edition, adding, whenever necessary, a comment or a correction on the basis of the Bodleian Manuscript.

Poznański also provided his edition with a very good French summary of the arguments advanced by Tobias in refutation of Mishawism's morning-to-morning count of calendar-days. Cf. *op. cit.*, 170–76.

Know ye, our brethren, that at at no time has there arisen in Israel a man who would argue that the [different categories of] days—the Days of Creation as well as the Days [legally circumscribed for the Order] of Sacrifices—were all [to be counted] from morning to morning, and that no days were [to be counted] from evening to evening.¹⁰⁶

The only [person who took] exception [and did insist on a *general* morning-to-morning count of days] was that Second Jeroboam, that man of a stammering tongue, the accursed one [Mishawayh al-Ba'albeki]. Now, I have compared him to Jeroboam not because he has matched the latter in greatness or in wisdom or in heroism, but because he has sinned and caused others to commit sin through evil intention, just as did Jeroboam when he led Israel astray.¹⁰⁷

Once having established the heretics' identity, Tobias would shift the onus of self-justification to the accusing party. As with the case of dietary legislation, then, he would not let slip from his fingers the opportunity of getting even with the Rabbanites in the field of calendary controversy as well. Delivering a backhanded slap at his Rabbanite accusers, he would point emphatically to the fact that among Mishawayh's "transgressions [which] to this very day are amid Israel" there were to be found such characteristically *Rabbanite* practices as "[calendar] computation, [precalculated] intercalation, postponements [of festivals], and many other [transgressions] of the same sort."¹⁰⁸ The implication was clear and followed the familiar line which Tobias pursued when he refuted Saadyah's insinuations concerning the consumption of fats:¹⁰⁹ while the Rabbanites try to blur unscrupulously the distinction between Mishawism and Karaism, they themselves were guilty of a marked community of religious observance with the Mishawite heretics.

But Tobias knew better than to be satisfied with needling the normative majority for being on one side of the fence with the Mishawites in the regular manifestations of Rabbinic calendation. The issue, he thought, was far more serious and called for serious measures. An all-Jewish problem it was, for never before was there so grave a heresy in Israel

¹⁰⁶ The lunar calendar measures the Days of Creation from evening to evening, i.e., it adds to the day the night *preceding* it. However, a Day of Sacrifices begins at sunrise and includes the night *following* it.

¹⁰⁷ Poznański [= *REJ*, XXXIV (1897)], 184: ודעו אחינו כי לא קם בישראל [אל] לעולם איש שיאמר כי הימים הם מבקר עד בקר יחד ימי הבריאה וימי הקרבנות ואין שם ימים מערב עד ערב. וזולת ירבעם הכי גלעג לשון הארור. ולא דימיתו אותו כירבעם למען כי היה איש גדול כירבעם וחכם וגבור חיל אכל חטא והחמיא כירבעם בזדון אש' הדיח את ישראל [אל]. Characteristically, Mishawayh is compared here to Jeroboam, whose calendar reform and reorganization of the institution of sacrifices became the prototype of Jewish dissent.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: ועד היום הזה חטאתיו נמצאים בתוך ישראל כמ'ן החשבון והעבור והדחיות וכמוהם הרבה. Incidentally, this passage bears evidence to the fact that even outside Babylonia the Mishawites continued to follow Rabbinic calendation, as far as festivals, New Year, intercalations, etc., were concerned. There is, however, no indication whether they celebrated the Rabbinic festivals from morning to morning, the way they celebrated the Sabbath. See above, 384.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. above, 390 f. (and note 98).

as the count of days, including the Sabbaths, from morning to morning. He, therefore, took upon himself to speak now for *all* Jewry, to shatter to pieces the scholastic edifice erected by the Mishawite sages and to produce incontrovertible documentation for the all-Jewish position.

Now, I shall refute the words of him of a stammering tongue, the accursed one [promises Tobias], and all his priests shall bewail him and [howl] for their [own] glory, ever since they have defiled themselves with the uncircumcised.

The last words allude, of course, to the allegedly Christian influence reflected in the Mishawite calendar.¹¹⁰

Henceforth, Tobias embarks on a step-by-step, limb-by-limb dissection of the Mishawite solar count of calendar-days. All through several packed pages he endeavors to refute the five-point documentation of his Mishawite opponents, calling to aid all the linguistic and exegetical arguments at his disposal. Since much of the argumentation depended on precision of meaning (or, rather, of the many possible meanings of a scriptural term which may be invoked differently in different contexts), Tobias would supplement his Hebrew statements with Greek glosses. This, we remember, was a standard procedure in Byzantine Hebrew literature in general, and was undoubtedly the procedure of Mishawite spokesmen as well.¹¹¹

From time to time, Tobias would stage a tactical retreat "for the sake of argument" (*al derekh hashlamah*),¹¹² only in order to blast his way through after a while with double triumph, exclaiming, "And so, the sayings of him of a stammering tongue are now null and void;"¹¹³ or, "Thus have been destroyed the words of him of a stammering tongue. . . , while our own statements stand fast;"¹¹⁴ or, more directly, "Consequently, there is no support for you from these quarters, neither for you of a stammering tongue, nor for your filthy disciples!"¹¹⁵ Then, turning to the reader, he would add piously, "In this manner have his [=Mishawayh's] pronouncements been voided on all points and aspects, with the help of God, Blessed be His Name."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Poznański, 184: ואני אשיב על דברי נלעג לשון הארור וכל כמריו עליו ילילו. וכל כבודם אש' . . . The passage is indebted to Hos. 10:5, changing ילילו to יגילו and ילילו to כבודם . . . אה ערלים נגאלו כבודם. Poznański, accordingly, corrected וכל כבודם to read כבודם אש' . . . אה ערלים נגאלו. The last clause (אש' . . . אה ערלים נגאלו) does not appear, of course, in the Book of Hosea.

¹¹¹ See above, 193 ff., 365, and below, 416, 444.

¹¹² Cf. Poznański, *passim* (e.g., 182, line 5, or 183, line 14).

¹¹³ Poznański, e.g., 182: וראם הדבר כאש' ביארתי בטלו דברי נלעג לשון אין בינה (ישעיה' ל"ג יט) . . . or, 183: ובטלו דבריו גם בזה המע[נה]; or, 188: ובטלו דבריו גם בזה המע[נה]; or, 191: ובטלו דבריו גם בזה המע[נה].

¹¹⁴ Poznański, 187 f.: . . . ובטלו דבריו גם בזה המע[נה].

¹¹⁵ Poznański, 183: וראם כן הדבר אין לך נלעג לשון עם תלמידך הטמאים מזה חוץ . . .

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*: [בטלו דבריו גם בזה המע[נה] = בעזרת השם יתברך שמו].

Finally, winding up the scholarly justifications of the orthodox observance of Sabbath eve on Friday night, Tobias would usher his sect into one happily unanimous company with the Rabbanites, gladly stressing the negligible import of Mishawism in the face of a nation united in its opposition to the Mishawite heresy.

Moreover, there is no division on the matter among Israel, [and it is agreed upon by all] that by commanding, "Keep the Sabbath Day" [Deut. 5:12], the Scripture [could not have] wished that Saturday night be joined to the Sabbath, but it meant really the evening preceding the Sabbath.¹¹⁷

Indeed, somewhat inconsistently with his earlier insinuations of Mishawism's "Christian" orientation, Tobias would now triumphantly argue that

likewise, there is no division on the matter between Israel and the Gentile nations. [They all agree] that the night precedes the day.¹¹⁸

Then, with a sudden surge of authoritarianism, which imperceptibly crept into the attitude of Karaism when it faced a minority smaller than itself, Tobias would become oblivious of his own sect's jealously guarded maxim of exegetic individualism. He would simply shrug off Mishawite claims of a similar right to individualistic radicalism by pointing to the crushing display of world unity in the matter.

Well [we hear Tobias saying at the close of the calendar discussion], *everybody* agrees with us that the evening comes before the day. We surely are not going to pay attention to the sayings of one man.¹¹⁹

THE MISHAWITE MENACE

Apparently, however, one *had* to pay attention to the sayings of that "one man." For, by Tobias' own admission,

117 Poznański, 191: גם אין בזה חלוקה בין ישראל [=ירא] כי עת שאמ' להם שמור את יום השבת כי חפץ . . . (ויק' כ"ג לב) מערב (צ"ל: ל א חפץ) מוצאי שבת עם יום השבת אבל חפץ לערב המוקדם לשבת, וכן אמ' (ויק' כ"ג לב) מערב (וי) ערב ערב חשבתו שבתכם. חזו ראייה גלויה

Characteristically, the same display of all-Jewish unity on the matter is hailed by Ibn Ezra in his *Epistle on the Sabbath*. Cf. the text as published by M. Friedländer, "Ibn Ezra in England," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, II (1894-95), 63: כל ישראל, הפרושים גם כל הצרוקים עמהם, יודעים כי לא נכתבה פרשת בראשית מעשה ה' בכל יום רק בעבור שידעו שומרי התורה איך ישמרו השבת. . . והנה זה הפירוש מתענה כל ישראל. במזרח ובמערב. גם הקרובים גם הרחוקים. גם החיים גם המתים (For Ibn Ezra's use of the term "Sadducees" for his Karaite contemporaries and their Babylonian and Palestinian mentors, see my "Elijah Bashyachi" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz*, XXV [1955-56], 61 f., 194 ff.)

118 Poznański, 191: גם אין חלוקה בין ישראל [=ירא] ובין אומות העולם כי הלילה הוא מוקדם ליום (the MS reads the last word: להם; Poznański corrects: לה[יני]ם). It seems, however, that the *yōd* and *wāw* of ליום blended in the cursive of some earlier copy into a *hē*. The word was then copied by our scribe as להם. Cf. the similar clause in the next note) וכאשר בדע זה כן נדע זה. כי השבת הוא אחר יום ה'. ואין פרק ביניהם שיא' איש למה לא יהיה. השבת בתוך ימי השבוע כשא' אמר] זה הודר [=מישוני] כי הלילה אחר היום.

119 Poznański, 191: הלא נא' כי אין חלוקה כי הוא [=השבת] אחר יום ה'. בכל [צ"ל: וכל] העיר[ולם]. ולא נשוב אל דברי איש א' [תד] מורים לנו בזה כן כי הערב מקדם ליום.

the sayings [*or*: the books] of that scoundrel [=Mishawayh] are many. . . , since the intention of the villain was to lead Jewry completely astray—may he be accursed in the presence of the God of Israel. The Lord will be willing to pardon neither him nor those who, in the stubbornness of their heart, did follow him; nor will He blot out his sins from His sight, for he [=Mishawayh] has sinned and caused others to commit sin.¹²⁰

The brief glimpses we are afforded, through Tobias' generous quotations and lengthy discussions, into the lost Mishawite writings suffice, indeed, to explain why these writings could not easily be ignored by the Karaite leadership in Byzantium. Mishawism was not a simple folk's creed, the way a *Qırķisānī*, we remember, would prefer to present it.¹²¹ Its literature was composed by scholars whose proficiency in dialectics, in biblical exegesis, and in the science of Hebrew philology was evidently outstanding. Tobias' facile discounting of the Mishawite adherents as "just any blind and lame"¹²² was hardly compatible with the amount of time, energy and erudition which he himself had spent on warding off their influence. The excellent linguistic equipment of the Mishawite debaters made it sometimes heavy going for him and his Karaite aids.

And suppose [Tobias advises his flock, staging a mock debate with the Mishawites] that he [=Mishawayh] says that all these [Karaite interpretations] which you have advanced are inconsistent with the literal meaning of the language. Let it be said, then, to him, "How do you know that? Have you got any proof to substantiate this [charge], or perchance you have learned it from the linguists?" And if he answers, "Aye, it is from the linguists that I know [it," let it be said to him] that all the linguists lie to him. Indeed, let it be said to him again, "You yourself are lying, for all these [interpretations of ours] are based on the literal meaning and there is not one of them which was arrived at by way of allegory."¹²³

It seems, then, that an all-out, competent refutation of Mishawism was important not only for the sake of clarifying the position of Karaism in the eyes of the Rabbanite majority. It apparently was an urgent desideratum for internal consumption as well. The inroads of Mishawite rationalism into the ranks of Byzantine Karaite intellectuals could not have been entirely unsuccessful. After all, Karaite intelligentsia in the

¹²⁰ Poznański, 191: ודברי זה הנבל רבים אבל לקטתי אש' בהם חווק [חזק?] והנחתי הפחיתים כי אין: בהם חפץ כי רצה הבליעל להדיח את יש[ראל] לגמרי. ארור הוא לאלהי יש[ראל], לא יאכה יי' טלוח לו ובל אהם והולכים אחריו. כשדירות לבם. ותטאתו מלפניו אל תמחי בי חטא והחטיא אבונם. As usual, the passage abounds in fragments of biblical verses (such as Deut. 29:18, 29:19; Jer. 18:23) which belonged to the standard vocabulary of medieval Jewish polemics.

¹²¹ Cf. above, 374, note 45.

¹²² Poznański, 181: כי כל עור ופסח אחריו הלך אש' לא ידעו את יי' ואת יחודו ואת דרך מצותיו. אבל שמעו מן הארור מיעוט דין. For the expression "any blind and lame," cf. II Sam. 5:8.

¹²³ Poznański, 185: ואם יאמ' כי אלה כלם אש' הראית אינם על דרך אמתת הלשון. יאמ' לו מאין: ידעת זה, היש לך ראיה על זה או מאנשי הלשון ידעת זה. ואם יא' כי מאנשי הלשון ידעתי [זה, יאמר לו] כי אנשי הלשון [אין] כולם מכזבים לו. ויא' לו שקר אתה מרבר כי כל זה על דרך אמת. ואין א' [חד] מהם על דרך עובר.

Empire was by no means immune to the cross-currents of philosophical and theological scepticism and ritual heterogeneity which corroded the body of Judaism in the period under discussion. The contrary rather was true: Having once taken the giant step and crossed the bridge of secession from the Mother Synagogue, the Karaites were left infinitely more exposed to successive corrosions by separatist tendencies than were their Rabbanite neighbors; the latter never questioned in the first place the authoritarian rule of the Talmud and of the normative institutions.

True, the centrifugal forces in the anti-talmudic camp, so bitterly deplored a century earlier by al-Ḳūmisī and Ḳırķisānī for having dissolved the movement into scores of divergent, self-defeating splinter groups,¹²⁴ had finally been brought under control. Initiated in the mid-tenth century, the tremendous work of unification and uniformization of Karaism was beginning to give fruits. Thanks to the unrelenting efforts of the Jerusalem Karaite authorities, a great measure of institutional consolidation and doctrinal uniformity was achieved. These signal attainments of the Jerusalem masters affected also in a most constructive way the Byzantine extension of the Karaite movement. Coinciding with the formative years of Karaism in Byzantium, they saved the Byzantine Karaite branch from the recurrent splits and deviations which used to plague eastern Karaism all through the ninth and early tenth centuries.

Nevertheless, the danger of continued development of schism and dissension within the sect was not wholly alleviated. This was true not only of the intelligentsia. While the erstwhile separatist tendencies were sublimated into *scholastic* individualism, *social* and *regional* rifts still remained factors to be reckoned with, especially where the impact of external forces was strongest. Indeed, a young immigrant community, such as that of the Karaites in Byzantium, would constantly be exposed to influences and pressures exerted not only by the well-established native Rabbanite majority but also by other dissident minority groups, even smaller than the Karaite community itself. Removed from the main artery of Karaite and all-Jewish communal activity and as yet fully dependent on the scholarship and religious guidance radiating from the Jerusalem academy, Byzantine Karaism was not yet sufficiently confident of its bearings in the late tenth and during the eleventh century. Some segments thereof could, indeed, fall prey to the intellectual encroachments of a vocal and evidently intelligent (though not necessarily numerous) group of a different sectarian orientation, such as were the Mishawites.

¹²⁴ See above, 220 (and notes).

It is, then, the threat of Mishawite inroads into the Karaite way of life in Byzantium, in addition to the horror of being equated with the Mishawite heresy by Rabbanite polemicists, that lay at the root of the unusually bitter denouncement of that heresy by the eleventh-century leadership of Byzantine Karaism.

THE PROBLEM OF THANKOFFERINGS

This thesis is well illustrated by the other point on which Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople and his contemporary Mishawite compatriots crossed swords: the problem of thankofferings. Similar to the morning-to-morning reckoning of calendar-days, this other point also was never before included in the Babylonian program of Mishawism.

Now, the issue we are about to discuss is mentioned here last for our own methodological reasons. Actually, it occupies in Tobias' critique of Mishawism the very first place and serves as his introduction to the whole anti-Mishawite debate. This introductory section is the more revealing since it deals with a problem which, unlike the calendary divergence, could have no practical application whatsoever. Hence, the seriousness with which Tobias viewed this clearly theoretical problem points, undoubtedly, to some deeper, hitherto undetected dangers.

The specific issue at hand was whether or not thankofferings [*korban tōdah*] were admitted during Passover. The difficulty lay in the fact that such offerings contained leavened bread, the use and even the sight of which are prohibited on that festival. The Karaites would answer the question in the negative, whereas the Mishawites [so Tobias claimed] pointed to two biblical precedents as sufficient ground for admitting the offerings. One precedent was the Pentateuchal story of thankofferings which were brought allegedly during Passover week by some of the princes of the Twelve Israelite Tribes in the Desert.¹²⁵ The other was the account of the cleansing and reconsecration of the House of the Lord during the reign of King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. There again, thankofferings were brought by the congregation on the seventeenth day of Nisan, i.e., when (in regular cases) the Passover holiday was on.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Num. 7:10 ff.

¹²⁶ II Chron. 29:17, 29:20, 29:31. Paradoxically, in the light of Talmon's recent explanation of the incident (*VT*, VIII [1958], 58 ff.), neither the Mishawites nor Tobias ben Moses the Karaite interpreted the biblical story correctly. On the other hand, it is worth noting, in continuation of our stress on Byzantine Karaite indebtedness to Rabbanite literature (see above, 244 f. and note 90, and below, 440 f., note 219), that, in the last of his three counter-arguments on the subject, Tobias echoed *Rabbinic* disapproval of Hezekiah's action. Cf. Bab. Tal. *Pesahim*, 56a, *Sanhedrin*, 12a.

Now, the *exegetical* justifications which Tobias ben Moses invoked in order to explain away the aforecited biblical narratives, in refutation of the Mishawite assertions, are of no direct relevance to the present discussion.¹²⁷ The remarkable part of the excursus is precisely its *non-exegetical* argumentation, the *general* accusations accompanying it—yes, its unprecedented gravity, its utterly astonishing irritation, its unusually passionate urgency. Indeed, if one were to measure the pitch of Tobias' anti-Mishawite animus in its variegated manifestations, one would have to accord the highest rating to his polemic on thanksofferings. This polemic showed a far greater intensity and violence than was manifest even in Tobias' refutation of the Mishawite desecration of the Sabbath eve.

Now [Tobias starts punching], no one would argue against the rule I had just explained in the matter [i.e., denying the admissibility of thanksofferings during Passover], except an impious, wicked unbeliever such as was the one of a stammering tongue, Mishawayh al-Ba'albekī, the accursed one—may his bones be beaten to pieces after his pomp has been brought down to the netherworld.¹²⁸

Indeed, in the midst of the uncircumcised did he lie,¹²⁹ this detestable [embodiment of] abomination and filth, this Second Jeroboam, who made Israel commit sin.¹³⁰ Maledicted be he in the presence of the God of Israel, and [accursed be] his companions. . . . For he has lifted from them the burden of the Law and permitted them food of Gentiles, sacrifices of the dead, blood of pigs, and wine [manufactured by non-Jews].¹³¹ He has permitted them [to indulge in] forbidden incestuous relations, [he has infringed upon the accepted norms of] purity and impurity, and [opened the way] in his limited intelligence—the villain!—[for the] desecration of God's festivals and of His sanctified Sabbaths. . . . Similarly he has erred in the present case and maintained that thanksofferings used to be brought on Passover.¹³²

But Tobias would not stop at that. The *practical* neglect of religious interdictions and obligations did not close the evil Mishawite circle yet. It was just a prelude to the last step, to the ultimate estrangement from the Jewish cause, to outright conversion. It is here that Tobias hurls the

¹²⁷ Cf. the text as published by Poznański, 181–83, and the latter's French summary and comments there, 165–69. An echo of the *exegetical* refutation has also been preserved in *Sefer ha-'Osher*, the Byzantine compilation which was produced a generation or so after Tobias and which, like Tobias, was indebted to Yefeth ben 'Alī. Cf. the hitherto unpublished section on Numbers, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 62a: ובימי הפסח לא הקריבו ה' גשימים [קרבן תודה] ובכ"ב בניסן הקריבו הנשארים.

¹²⁸ Isa. 14:11.

¹²⁹ Ez. 31:18.

¹³⁰ I Kings 16:26.

¹³¹ For Karaite exhortations against food prepared by Gentiles, cf., e.g., Sahl ben Mašlah, in Pinsker, *Likḳūtē Qadmoniyoth*, App. III, 28, 33 (see above, 253, note 5), etc. Cf. also the Karaite-Rabbanite marriage contract cited above, 297, note 15.

¹³² Poznański, 181: ולא יוכל אדם לטעון על זה הכלל שבניארחי כו השאלה. כי אם זר ורשע וכפרן: כמ' גלעג הלשון משוי אל בעל בקי הארור ישחחקו עצמותיו כי ירד אל שאול גאווה והוא את ערלים שכב שקץ סנוף בעל תועבה אשר החטיא את יש[ראל] וכל הנללים עמו. . . והקל עליהם עול התו[רה] והחיר להם מאכלות הגנים זבחי מתים ורם חזירים ויין שמרים והחיר להם ערוות אסורות וטומאה וטחרה ותלול מועדי יי ושבתותיו המקורשים במעוט דעתו. . . וכן תעה בזה העניי' ואמ' כי קרבן תודה יעשה בימי הפסח

accusation that Mishawayh deserted the *theological* premises of Judaism, betrayed Jewish monotheism and espoused the Christian idea of Trinity. Paraphrasing the Prophets of yore, Tobias delivered himself of the most thundering indictment ever pinned on a nonconformist in the Byzantine Jewish society.

Against the Lord he [=Mishawayh] hath spoken perversion,¹³³
That impious unbeliever!
Yea, gray hairs were here and there upon him,
Yet he knew not;¹³⁴
False prophet that he was,
Three deities he hath worshipped in his old age.
For pass over to the isles of the Kittites, and see,
And send unto Kedar, and consider diligently,
And see if there hath been such a thing.¹³⁵
Hath a prophet changed his gods,
Which yet are no gods?¹³⁶
But he of a stammering tongue hath changed his glory¹³⁷
For three corpses.
Would not his companions and disciples be ashamed
Just as ashamed was he?
So perish all Thine enemies,¹³⁸ O Lord!¹³⁹

IMPUTATION OF APOSTASY

This unbridled outburst by Tobias, hardly matched in vehemence by anything that had been uttered heretofore even in the course of the most violent intra-Jewish polemics in Byzantium, is surprising both on account of its content and in view of its incompatibility with the texture of the general theme with which it had been interwoven.

In the first place, the long-winded list of *general* sins and transgressions which Tobias had pinned on his Mishawite neighbors is not devoid of difficulty. Truly, in no other source was so grave a neglect of dietary precautions, marital laws, ritual purity, etc., ever imputed to Mishawayh himself or to his followers.¹⁴⁰ Far more inexplicable—frankly, unbeliev-

¹³³ Deut. 13:6.

¹³⁴ Hos. 7:9.

¹³⁵ Jer. 2:10.

¹³⁶ Jer. 2:11, substituting "prophet" for "nation."

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, substituting "he of a stammering tongue" for "My people."

¹³⁸ Jud. 5:31.

¹³⁹ Poznański, 182: על י"י דבר סרה הוד הכפרן כי גם שיבה זרקו בו והוא לא ידע כי נביא שקר כמזהר עבד ג' אלוהות לעת זקנתו. כי עברו איי כתיים ודאו וקדר שלחו והתבוננו מ[אד וראו ה]ן היתה כזאת ההמיד נביא אלהים והמה לא אלהים ונלעג לשון המיר כבודו בנ' מתים. הלא יבשו כל חביריו וחלמידיו כאש' בוש הוא כן יאבד' כל אויבך יי'

¹⁴⁰ Poznański, too, stressed the absence of corroborating evidence for Tobias' accusations. He could not but express "hope that new investigations will eventually shed more light on the Jewish sects in the time of the Geonim." Cf. the closing paragraph of his essay, 180.

able—is Tobias' *specific* accusation, hurled at Mishawayh *personally*, namely, that this ninth-century heresiarch of Babylonia had entered the Christian faith in his old age.¹⁴¹ Even if we admit that Tobias "could not have invented it all,"¹⁴² the failure of a Ẕirkīšānī to hint at such a development forcefully argues against an unqualified acceptance of the story.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ The story of Mishawayh's alleged conversion to Christianity was first revealed a century-and-a-quarter ago by L. Zunz. Cf. the new Hebrew edition (by Albeck) of his *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge, Had-Derashoth be-Yisrael*, 500, note 175. It was accepted by Delitzsch (in his edition of Aaron ben Elijah's 'Eṣ Ḥayyim, 316, note**, and 322 (top)), by Steinschneider (in the Bodleian *Catalogus*, 2169), and by Pinsker (*Likkūtē*, App. X, 88 f., note 3).

Graetz objected to Zunz's inference on the ground that, as an apostate, Mishawayh would no longer be capable of mustering a following among his people. This objection was refuted by Harkavy in his note to Graetz's excursus on the Mishawites (or rather, as Graetz calls them, the "Ba'albekītes"). Cf. the Hebrew edition of Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden* by S. P. Rabinowitz, *Dibrē Yemē Yisrael*, III, 458 (Note XVIII), Harkavy's addendum No. 150. Harkavy argued that the examples of conversion of, say, a Sabbatai Zevi or a Jacob Frank, taken from the fairly recent history of Jewish messianism, make Graetz's reasoning unconvincing. Even after accepting Islām or Christianity, respectively, the converted pretenders were not deserted by their close followers for several generations. At the same time, Harkavy refrained from taking a stand in the matter as long as the full text of the manuscript remained unknown. Poznański, who published the text, espoused Harkavy's cautious attitude, as well as the latter's refutation of the argument of Graetz. Cf. his essay, 180.

A new and interesting interpretation has recently been suggested by Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 196. Stressing the syncretism of the time in the Islamic regions, Baron believes that "Mishawayh seems to have drawn the extreme consequence of his syncretistic teachings.... He not only professed Christianity..., but also 'served three deities in his old age,' that is, he simultaneously professed belief in the God of Israel, Jesus, and Muḥammad."

It seems to me that Baron's solution would be perfectly acceptable if the crucial sentence—עבד ג' אלוהות לעת זקנתו—were standing alone. But it does not. In the sentence thereafter Tobias states the same accusation in different words. There he condemns Mishawayh for having "changed his glory for three corpses." There can be no doubt that the God of Israel was not counted by Tobias among the 'three corpses' but was the very 'glory' which Mishawayh had allegedly forsaken. One might decide perhaps that Tobias was implying two separate stages in Mishawism's religious development: the first ('three deities') was a sort of Muslim-Christian-Jewish syncretism, whereas the later stage ('three corpses') entailed outright conversion to Christianity. However the text as a whole hardly warrants so elaborate an inference. Considering the fact that the accusation arose in a *Christian* environment (see below, note 143), it seems more plausible, then, to conclude that all through the passage the Trinity alone was meant.

¹⁴² Poznański, 180.

¹⁴³ However questionable the value of an *argumentum e silentio* in historical research, the silence of Ẕirkīšānī, the Babylonian Karaite historian who lived merely a few decades or so after Mishawayh, is a powerful piece of evidence. It shows that nothing was known of Mishawayh's alleged apostasy in the East, where Mishawayh

No less astonishing is the very inclusion by Tobias of these allegations in the context of a discussion on the rather innocent theme of thankofferings. One will perhaps grant that the general accusation of Christian leanings was bolstered by Mishawism's calendar peculiarity.¹⁴⁴ The Mishawite observance of the Jewish Sabbath till *Sunday* morning (ignoring the characteristically Jewish custom of celebrating Friday night) could not fail to evoke a popular association with the *Christian* Sabbath. The regular weekly recurrence of that observance helped, undoubtedly, in creating the notion of a *general* Mishawite affinity to Christianity. But would not, in that case, the excursus in which Tobias endeavored to refute Mishawism's morning-to-morning count of calendar-days prove a more appropriate platform for voicing accusations of Christian kinship than the rather extraneous story of thankofferings?

Indeed, the whole tone permeating Tobias' discussion of the issue of thankofferings strikes the reader as utterly incongruous with the subject-matter. To present the problem of "Whether or not thankofferings could be brought on a Passover" in so passionate a way, as if it really were a world-shaking affair, while, to all intents and purposes, it was of no practical consequence anywhere in the time under discussion, surely demands an explanation. The editor of the text already felt that, unless there was some practical angle to the question, Tobias' vehement and disproportionate inflation of this plainly non-essential exegetical riddle would have to remain incomprehensible. It was his conviction, then, that the true issue underlying the Mishawite-Karaite discussion of the

lived and was active in the latter part of the ninth century and where his followers were still known a generation later, in Ƙırķisānī's time. It should be remembered that, in addition to his literary sources, Ƙırķisānī had in this case the benefit of an eye-witness testimony by a compatriot of Mishawayh, an 'Ukbarite elder (see above, 383). Whatever the distance between theory and practice in Babylonian Mishawism, it is not even remotely conceivable that the Jewish community of 'Ukbara could have passed over in silence, let alone remained ignorant of, so extreme a deflection by a conspicuous personality in its midst.

On the other hand, the responsibility for the glaring omission of the conversion story from Ƙırķisānī's "Survey of Jewish Sects" can hardly be laid at the door of Ƙırķisānī himself. The general manner in which Ƙırķisānī reported on Mishawayh obviates any suspicion that he had withheld from the reader damaging information he had at his disposal, in order to spare the heresiarch. In fact, the contrary might be expected. The impression is gained that Ƙırķisānī, who went out of his usually calm and detached way to introduce Mishawayh as "another of those dissenting fools," would gladly have welcomed an incriminating story such as was the eleventh-century report of Tobias on Mishawayh's conversion to Christianity. Cf. above, 374, note 45.

¹⁴⁴ Poznański, 180, note 5; Mahler, *Haḳ-Ḳara'im*, 200, note 19.

biblical narratives on thankofferings was indeed of a practical, legalistic nature.¹⁴⁵

THE GREAT DIVIDE

I have little doubt that Tobias ben Moses' fulminating yet general anti-Mishawite utterances in connection with the issue of thankofferings have nothing to do with this or that specific legal principle.¹⁴⁶ They are so completely different in nature and content from all the hitherto discussed excursuses of Tobias which dealt with Mishawite deviations that they demand a different approach altogether.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Poznański, 169. The issue revolved, in the opinion of Poznański, around the question of the validity in biblical legislation of the legal principle 'aseh *dōheh lō' ta'aseh*. The principle itself, proclaiming that "the do's supersede the do-not's," was argued back and forth in the Talmud. Its rejection by the Karaites was particularly relevant, insofar as *practical* considerations are concerned, in the laws of incest and levirate marriage.

In the specific case of thankofferings the point was rather *theoretical*: the Karaites insisted that a positive commandment ('aseh), such as the obligation of offering a thanksgiving sacrifice, had no force to modify injunctions based on prohibitory laws (*lō' ta'aseh*), e.g., the interdiction of leaven on Passover. Against this rigid position of the Karaites, the Mishawites pointed to the biblical precedents in Numbers and Second Chronicles. These precedents, they claimed, served as authoritative proof of the weight of positive laws against earlier prohibitions. Nevertheless, no great imagination is required in order to perceive the possible *practical* implications of such a slant in the Mishawite-Karaite controversy. Its far-reaching repercussions could have been felt in all fields of the daily life of both the Jewish individual and his community.

Poznański's presentation of the problem was accepted and repeated as a matter of fact by Mahler, *Hak-Ḳara'im*, 199 f.

¹⁴⁶ Poznański's learned speculation regarding the two allegedly opposing schools of legal thought is difficult to maintain. It is true that the Karaites reduced the application of "the do's supersede the do-not's" to a bare minimum. But there is no certainty at all that the Mishawites entertained a different view. On the contrary: One has ample reason to believe that, theoretically at least, they were even more perplexed by the collision of positive and negative commandments than were the Karaites.

A clear-cut illustration to this effect—incidentally, having to do also with sacrifices—is afforded by Ḳirkisānī (*Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 58; *HUCA*, VII [1930], 390) and by Hadassī (*Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98). Mishawayh is reported to have "asserted that no sacrifices whatsoever should be offered on the Sabbath [proper] and that the passage of the Scripture [Num. 28:10], 'The burnt-offering of each Sabbath on its Sabbath,' meant actually 'for its Sabbath.' Thus, [the sacrifice] was offered *before* the Sabbath *for the sake of* the [coming] Sabbath."

Through his refusal to apply in this case the principle of "the do's supersede the do-not's," Mishawayh not only joined all earlier sectaries (including 'Anan) in stressing the incongruity of sacrifices with the Sabbath. He went even farther—farther than the Judaean Desert Sectaries of ancient days, farther than the Samaritans and the 'Ananites of his own time. For these other schools, while forbidding sacrifices on the Day of Rest, expressly exempted from this prohibition the *regular* burnt-

The other excursions—that on the Mishawites' calendar peculiarity, for instance, or that on their dietary laxity—were concerned, on the whole, with particular symptoms only. However irritable and however forcefully denouncing Mishawism, they were merely *describing* areas of Mishawite heresy and *listing* points of friction between adherents of that heresy and their Karaite neighbors. They hardly ever reached out for the *raison d'être* of Karaite-Mishawite antagonism; for they hardly ever delved into the *source of Mishawite rebellion* and dug down to the *roots of Mishawism itself*. Not so the present vehement condemnation of the Mishawite position in conjunction with the issue of thankofferings on Passover.

Located, as already noted, at the head of all other anti-Mishawite excursions in Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* and actually introducing Tobias' presentation of Mishawism and of the Karaite-Mishawite controversy at large,¹⁴⁷ the paragraph on thankofferings aimed at what seemed to the Karaite spokesman the core of the difference between the two sects. Once the rock-bottom point of Mishawite dissent was reached, the whole complex of Mishawite-Karaite relations would automatically be laid open. By exposing what the Karaites thought was the mechanism itself which propelled Mishawism on its independent journey through history, Tobias would touch the most sensitive spot in the nerve-system of attitudes and reactions that had set Karaism and Mishawism against each other. And, vice versa, by baring what seemed to Tobias the true dividing line between the respective philosophies of the two groups and their irreconcilable concepts of Judaism, he would force his way through into the innermost chambers of the Mishawite phenomenon.

This true dividing line in the warfare between the two heterodoxies was [so we learn from Tobias] their *attitude to the Bible*.

offering (*tamid*). Mishawayh alone, so it seems, went to the farthest known extreme: he pointed to the interdiction of work on the Sabbath as plainly contradicting the obligation of offering the *tamid* as well. (For the true intention of Mishawayh in this matter, cf. below, 412, note 154.)

In the light of this extremist position, Poznański's reconstruction is hardly tenable. There is no reason to assume that Mishawayh saw fit to alter his views in the instance of thankofferings on Passover.

Also the general style and direction of Tobias' anti-Mishawite excursus on thankofferings militate against the solution suggested by Poznański. Cf. my additional arguments in *Mishawiyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. above, 400.

As Tobias saw it, pitched against each other along the Great Divide were two divergent evaluations of the Bible and of its role in the life of the Jewish society. On the one side of the demarcation line there lay entrenched Karaism's unconditional recognition of the Bible as the Divine Manifestation of Lawmaking Authority in Judaism.¹⁴⁸ The unshaken Karaite confidence in the Bible and in the Bible's infallibility could, of course, not admit of inner conflicts and contradictions within the scriptural text itself. Basing the belief in the Scriptures' self-evident truthfulness and justice on God's self-evident Wisdom and Morality, Karaism could not tolerate the thought that punishment might possibly be meted out to men as result of conflicting injunctions by the biblical Lawmaker. Hence, it flatly denied the existence of such conflicts.

Across the line, Mishawite scepticism had dug in, juggling with factual and textual contradictions in the extant version of the Scriptures, fortified by historical precedents in which the biblical narrative itself would sometimes counter the Revealed Legislation.

Here, Tobias was convinced, was an issue not of Divine Law but of Divine Ethics, a test not of a Legal Principle but of Belief. Here was a head-on, unavoidable collision of pietists with a free-thinking [or so it seemed to the Karaite pietists] intelligentsia:

the pietists—desperately in quest of a harmonizing formula that would explain why one biblical passage contradicted another;

the sceptics—exploiting the self-same passages not merely in order to criticize the specific contradictions themselves but also in order to justify with their aid a *general* neglect of religious duties;

the pietists—bent on saving the moral values and stability intertwined with adherence to what was believed to be a Revealed (hence infallibly ethical) Code of Behavior;

the sceptics—despairing of Divine Morality, doomed to sink [thus predicted the pietists] in utter nihilism and eventual betrayal of the Jewish cause;

¹⁴⁸ This statement, the reader will remember from earlier chapters, does not mean that "biblicism" was the primary *cause* of the rise of Karaism. Nor does it entail the conception that the Karaites did not develop an "Oral Law" of their own. It merely intends to stress that, from the Karaite legal standpoint, the non-normative practices preserved and developed by Karaism had to be read into the Bible in order to become law. It also stresses the fact that by the mid-eleventh century, when the great Byzantine Karaite offensive against Mishawism was under way, "biblical" orientation was viewed already, by friend and foe alike, as the yardstick of Karaite allegiance and was extolled by Karaite spokesmen as the recognition mark of the True Creed.

the pietists—considering the Hebrew Scriptures the exclusive fountain-head of Wisdom, Justice and Law;

the sceptics—indulging freely not only in Bible criticism and in the perusal of apocryphal literature (such as the *Book of Jubilees*), but also, despite time-honored taboos by all sides, in the reading of the Gospels (though probably not sparing them in their criticism any more than the Old Testament).

Woe to them [we hear Tobias threatening with hell-fire], woe to them! Whither shall they flee on the Day of Judgment? To whom will they resort for help? Will he of a stammering tongue [=Mishawayh] stand up to save them, along with Matthew, John, Paul and Luke?¹⁴⁹

KARAITE VIEW OF MISHAWITE HERESY

It may, of course, be taken for granted that the above-cited radical manifestations of Mishawite rationalism and scepticism, denounced by Tobias, reflected social tensions, transformations and interests. One might, indeed, speculate on the nature of the *social motivations* and on the *relative social position* of either of the opposing sides (or, rather, of their official spokesmen) within the contemporaneous Jewish community. The respective attitudes and reactions could then be weighed accordingly and viewed against the background of the sophisticated, semi-capitalistic society of the time and of Jewry's integration in that society. Yet, on the basis of our sources we can infer nothing specific to this effect. Nor, for that matter, could we expect our chief informant, the eleventh-century spokesman of Byzantine Karaism, to dwell on the social aspects and motives of what appeared to him a clear-cut matter of Faith and Observance.

Similarly, one cannot say without hesitation that such *conceptual* division reflected also the Mishawite view of the situation. After all, as was already stressed at the outset of the present discussion, we learn of the Mishawite doctrines and policies solely from what their Karaite opponents had chosen to tell us about them. Bible criticism as such was not new, of course. The Mishawites merely joined hands with a respectable line of Bible critics, of whom the ninth-century Hayawayh (Hiwi) al-Balkhi is best known; the latter, a contemporary of Mishawayh, was combatted both by biblically oriented sectarians (e.g., by at-Tiflisi) and by the Rabbanites (Saadyah Gaon).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ See the Hebrew text of the passage, below, 413, note 156.

¹⁵⁰ On Hayawayh see I. Davidson, *Saadia's Polemic against Hiwi al-Balkhi*; M. Stein, "Hiwi al-Balkhi—the Jewish Marcion" (Hebrew), *Sefer Klausner*, 210–25;

But our reconstruction seems to be reflecting faithfully the one and only meaning of the Mishawite danger and of the need for an anti-Mishawite campaign *as it appeared to the eyes of Tobias and his Byzantine Karaite colleagues* when they were discussing the subject of thankofferings.

J. Rosenthal, *Hiwi al-Balkhi: A Comparative Study*; and the literature cited in the notes to the last-mentioned work.

No attempt has been made as yet to study Mishawayh's doctrine (or, rather, what we know of it from the mouth of its opponents) in the context of the ninth-century Bible criticism, of which Hayawayh is (thanks to his critics) the best known, but by no means sole, exponent. The only mention of Mishawayh and Hayawayh together is, as far as I can recall, Rosenthal's addendum to p. 13 (note 59) of his book. Rosenthal draws attention there (p. 56) to the fact that both heretics dealt with the question of sacrifices during the Sabbath (cf. above, 405 f., note 146, and below, 412, note 154). But Rosenthal's comment does not transgress the boundaries of a purely bibliographical item. No kinship, or even parallel, between the two contemporaries (except for their accidental inquiry into the same problem) is implied.

In addition to that, interesting parallels—though hardly a kinship of cause—can be detected between Mishawite Bible criticism and *Rabbanite* lists of Bible difficulties. Such lists—first brought to light by Schechter ("The Oldest Collection of Bible Difficulties by a Jew," *JQR* [O. S.], XIII [1900-1901], 345 ff.) and reedited a decade ago by J. Rosenthal ("Ancient Questions Regarding the Bible" [Hebrew], *HUCA*, XXI [1948], Hebrew Section, 29 ff.)—were apparently quite popular in the eleventh century. Their purpose was, of course, not anti-biblical but anti-Karaite and anti-massoretic. They intended to show the insufficiency of massoretic and purely biblical studies; only talmudic scholarship could explain away the textual and factual difficulties and contradictions in the scriptural material and make this material the reliable basis for practical legislation which it was meant to be. No wonder Karaite exegetical compilations of the period—e.g., the Byzantine Hebrew *Sefer ha-'Osher*—are teeming with references to such difficulties and with answers thereto (some of the *loci* in *Sefer ha-'Osher* were cited by Rosenthal from the printed section of the book; scores of additional references are scattered through the hitherto unpublished part of the Commentary, Leiden MS Warner No. 8).

Thus, Rosenthal (*HUCA*, XXI [1948], Hebrew Section, 73) has correctly drawn attention to the *Rabbanite* question in the Schechter list regarding *heleb* (fats) and to the similar position of the Mishawites in the matter. In another fragment—published by L. Ginzberg, *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 491 ff., esp. 495 f., and reedited by Rosenthal, *HUCA*, XXI, 53 f., and now proven definitely to be part of the same collection (see A. Scheiber's "Unknown Leaves from *She'eloth 'Atiḱoth*," *HUCA*, XXVII [1956], 291 f.)—biblical allusions are claimed by the *Rabbanite polemicists* for such typically "Mishawite" elements as the celebration of Passover on a Thursday (see above, 377) or a calendar of thirty-day mensal units (cf. above, 377, 393).

To be sure, Bible criticism was not unknown to the community of 'Ukbara in earlier generations. Half a century prior to Mishawayh we find there Ismā'il al-'Ukbarī, whose sayings, according to Ẓirkīsānī, "resembled the ravings of a madman" and were "harmful, shameful, and absurd to the utmost degree." Ismā'il "asserted that some things in the Scripture were not as they are now." He "denied the *kethīb* and the *keri*;" as did also "some of the Karaites of Khorāsān." Cf. *Kitāb al-Anwār*, I, 13, 56, 62 (*HUCA*, VII [1930], 329, 388, 395). For a broader investigation of the relationship between Mishawayh and earlier and contemporary Bible critics, cf. my *Mishawiyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*.

question of a suitable legalistic formula. A matter of confidence it was, we hear Tobias argue heatedly, confidence in God and His Morality.

This was a timeless problem, one that embraced the present, the past, and the future as well. For,

likewise, if we pin on God this [accusation of corruption in the case of thanksgiving], then we may as well ascribe to Him corruption in every single word which He had uttered and promised regarding the Future Consolation [of Israel] and [suspect] that He might retract and break it and never make it come true. And in this way we shall be ultimately led to lose trust in His Torah and His Prophets, for how can we be sure they are true once we have pinned on Him a thing like this?

Such a nihilistic concept would, then, undermine perforce the morale of the people, turn Jewry's perennial hopes for a Future Redemption into empty words—indeed, it would be tantamount to national suicide!

Hence [Tobias winds up the introductory paragraph in which he had posed the thank-offerings problem], if this reasoning is correct, [the possibility of] presenting thank-offerings during the Passover days must be considered inconceivable.¹⁵²

Having, once and for all, established the rule of flat denial of a possible conflict between different sections of the Bible, Tobias turns to hammer away at Mishawism. Beginning with the paragraph which we have already quoted in full a few pages earlier, he delivers his first blow:

Now, no one would argue against the rule I had just explained in the matter, except an impious, wicked unbeliever, such as was the one of a stammering tongue, Mishawayh al-Ba'albeki.¹⁵³

The unbeliever!

Here, then, was the crux of the problem: a test of belief or unbelief. Here also must the explanation be sought for what otherwise seemed an entirely extraneous string of insinuations, hardly following from the exegetical theme of thankofferings. The list of unrestrained transgressions and the general "christianizing" orientation ascribed to Mishawayh become now perfectly intelligible. They are (or so claimed Tobias) the self-evident, inevitable consequence of Mishawayh's doctrinal platform

ויפר דברו. הלא תראה כי אם נאמ' כי אמ' לנו ז' ימים מצות תאכלו. ואמ' שאור לא ימצא בבתיכם. ואחל אמר לנו כי בדי ימי מצה עשו תורה. והתורה לא תעשה לעו' [לם] אלא בלחם חמץ הלא היה נותן דבריו הראשונים והוא דבר מושחת. וי' יח'ש לא יעשה שיחת (For the reader's convenience, the reference is given here, as well as in the subsequent notes, to the Poznański edition of the anti-Mishawite excursus [see above, 394, note 105]. In reality, however, the text reproduced herewith differs slightly from that printed in *REJ*. It is based on a consultation of the Bodleian MS itself.)

יבם אם נעביר עליו זה הרבר נעביר על כל דבר ודבר שא' [מר] והבטיח מן הנחמות: 152 Poznański, 181. בי ישוב ויתן אתם [=אותם] ולא יאמין אחר [=אחר]. ובזה הרבר יוליך שלא נאמין תורתו ונביאו כי מאין נדע צמתתם אחר שנעביר עליו זה הרבר. ואם כן הרבר לא יתכן להקדיב קרבן תורה בימי המסח

¹⁵³ Cf. above, 401, and note 132.

and of his approach to the Bible. They are the result of his indulgence in the demoralizing pastime of digging up Bible difficulties. Digging up Bible difficulties—this, exactly, is what Mishawayh was doing when he confronted the biblical prohibition of leaven on Passover with the contradicting biblical stories from the Sinai Wilderness and the Judaeon Kingdom.¹⁵⁴

The “impious, wicked unbeliever!” His Bible criticism *must* lead to unbelief, Tobias argued. Once an abrogation of divinely ordained laws was sanctioned, “the burden of the Law” *would* “be lifted,” whatever the pretext in the given case. For the danger was not limited to occasional manifestations of ritual laxity or even to convenient social assimilation “in the midst of the uncircumcised.” Proclaiming the biblical law as subject to changes through history—indeed, proving the point from within the different strata of the scriptural text itself—and, consequently, abrogating certain sections of that text in favor of others, was bound, in the opinion of the Karaites, to shake the very foundations of Judaism. There was no end to the chain-reaction initiated by one abrogation, after

¹⁵⁴ This also, in my opinion, was his true intention when he raised the issue of burnt-offerings on the Sabbath (cf. above, 405 f., note 146). Kırkisānī, as usual, failed to notice the edge of Mishawayh’s argument in the case. He thought that the heresiarch *actually* interpreted Num. 28:10 to mean that the burnt-offering was sacrificed before the Sabbath for the sake of the Sabbath. However, in the light of Mishawayh’s general attitude, such a concept is simply unthinkable.

What Mishawayh was really after was to point to a further contradiction in the biblical text, a contradiction which—as Tobias correctly appraised in the case of thanksoffering—might be taken as proof that God had broken His own word and had demanded something which He himself had previously forbidden. As I see it, Kırkisānī gave only the first part of Mishawayh’s argument. The reasoning of the heretic ran like this: If God is Wise and Moral, then He would not forbid something and then retract and demand it from His people. The correct understanding of Num. 28:10 *must*, then, shift the act of sacrifice from Saturday to the Friday before. But, Mishawayh argued, this is not the accepted interpretation. Both the normative exegesis and that of all the sectarian schools combined interpret the verse to mean that God had actually demanded a sacrifice on the Sabbath proper. In other words, they all knowingly confirm the fact that the God of Israel is unwise and corrupt, breaks His own word and is ready to punish His people for not doing things which He himself considered earlier to be unpermissible.

Indeed, as already mentioned above, 409, note 150, also Ḥayawayh al-Balkhī raised the problem in a similar vein. There are, of course, important differences between Ḥayawayh and the Mishawites (see on them my *Mishawiyyah: The Vicissitudes of a Medieval Jewish Sect under Islām and Christianity*); but the general tenor of the argumentation is the same. Unless we assume that Mishawayh intended to *answer* accusations of the sort expounded by Ḥayawayh and kindred heretics—and there is not the slightest indication that he so intended—we shall have to view the Sabbath argument of Mishawayh much as we viewed his argument on thanksofferings, i.e., as another case of *digging up* Bible difficulties rather than *reconciling* them.

the sanction of that abrogation had been driven to its logical conclusion. Not only would later Pentateuchal chapters supersede earlier Mosaic legislation and later-composed Scriptures displace the earlier Books, but the Apocrypha would eventually substitute for the late Canonical Writings, the Evangelists would assume thereafter the erstwhile role of the Prophets of Israel—indeed, the New Testament will ultimately take the place of the Old!

Woe to them [we again hear Tobias deploring the punishment which awaited “those of limited intelligence who had followed Mishawayh in his worthless sayings”], whither shall they flee on the Day of Judgment? To whom will they resort for help?¹⁵⁵ Will he of a stammering tongue stand up to save them, along with Matthew, John, Paul and Luke?¹⁵⁶

THE END OF MISHAWISM

The picture Tobias had drawn of Mishawism's wholesale abandonment of traditional Jewish customs was a partisan picture, of course. Tobias was a fighter, not a historian. His was a fiery exhortation *against* Mishawism, not a scholarly dissertation *on* it.

Indeed, the other extant sources, while confirming Tobias' indictment of the Mishawite calendar, do not list the three remaining manifestations of religious neglect which Tobias imputed to the Mishawites: partaking of Gentile food, carelessness in matters of family purity, and disregard of the rules of personal defilement and purification.¹⁵⁷ True, the silence of authors who were not involved so directly in combatting the Mishawite heresy on the spot as was the eleventh-century Tobias ben Moses in Byzantium may be misleading. In the eyes of far-off scholars (like Ibn Ezra) or of transient visitors (like Benjamin) the weekly recurring desecration of the Sabbath eve was the most conspicuous mark of Mishawism; hence, the Mishawite calendar deviation may have overshadowed all other, no less real, characteristics of the sect. On the other hand, one must beware of hasty reliance on an adversary like Tobias. This is especially true of such allegations as conviviality with Gentiles, sexual promiscuity and negligence in ritual purity. These allegations always constituted standard items in medieval Jewish polemics¹⁵⁸ and were tossed back

¹⁵⁵ Paraphrasing Isa. 10:3. For a similar exhortation in a different context, see the Tobias text above, 250, last quotation in note 103.

¹⁵⁶ Poznański, 182: ובאפיסת הראיה על קיום דבריו [= של מישוי] ראה על שקרותו ונבלותו ומיעוט דעתו בתורת יי. . . כי הוא גבל מעוררו בער. אבל מיעוטי דעה אש' הלכו אחריו על דבריו הפחותים אוי להם אנה יברחו ביום הדין על מי ינוסר לעזרה. היעמד נלעג לשון עם מתי ויוחנן ואבא שאול ולוקא להרשיעם.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. above, 402, and note 140.

¹⁵⁸ See, for instance, Sahl's oft-quoted Epistle, in *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 28, 30, 32.

and forth by contending parties with neither attaching too much weight to their content. We must, therefore, be careful not to mistake accusations, repeated from stereotype patterns of timeless interdenominational controversies, for statements of facts referring to eleventh-century Mishawism in Byzantium.

Paradoxically, what makes Tobias' presentation nevertheless believable—in its major outline, that is, if not in every single detail—is the last and gravest charge he pinned on the founder of the sect, i.e., his accusation that Mishawayh promoted outright conversion to Christianity. Tobias' clear-cut citing of the Mishawite preoccupation with the Gospels and with the idea of Trinity has an unmistakably genuine ring. It surely cannot be put in one class with the popular notion associating Mishawism with Christianity; that notion, we remember, rested on the sheer coincidence of the last hours of the Mishawite Sabbath with the beginning hours of the Christian Sunday.¹⁵⁹ Nor can Tobias' accusation be shrugged off as a repetition of earlier insinuations; the charge has no precedent in Karaism's vast polemical tradition. However prejudiced, then, Tobias seems to have been pointing to actual facts.

For—here is the key to the discrepancy between his report and that of *Ḳirḳisānī*—what Tobias always held out before his listeners was the eleventh-century Byzantine reality, not mere literary recollections of earlier (tenth-century) writers. Of course, he copiously utilized such literary recollections—observations of a *Ḳirḳisānī* in Babylonia or of a Yefeth ben 'Ali in Palestine. Yet, the subject of his exhortations was Mishawite practice of his own time and country. The situation he invoked was that of the very moment in which he addressed his audience, and the Mishawites he spoke against were his actual neighbors on the Byzantine scene.

Conversions to Christianity among the later Mishawites who lived in a Christian climate must have occurred not infrequently. Excommunicated by their Jewish brethren, Orthodox and Karaite alike,¹⁶⁰ the Byzantine Mishawites could not help being partly perplexed, partly cynical, about their erstwhile unavoidable compromises with (ninth-century Babylonian) circumstances and about the persistence of their inner contradictions even in the later changed conditions (of Syria and Byzantium). Not living according to their own lights in all events, some of them may have ceased to believe in the justification and very wisdom of perpetuating

¹⁵⁹ Cf. above, 378, 404.

¹⁶⁰ See the quotation from Benjamin above, 387, note 87.

their independent and confused existence. Assimilation was the answer. The direction of that assimilation was, of course, not uniform. It stands to reason that social and economic ties with the surrounding populations decided the issue. Accordingly, some of the Mishawites may have resigned themselves to rejoining the *Rabbanite* society; except for the Sabbath deviation, they adhered anyway to the precalculated Rabbinic calendar.¹⁶¹ Others, apparently, may have despaired of Judaism altogether. They consequently severed all ties with their Jewish neighbors and ultimately assimilated in the local *Christian* community.

Here again, as I see it, an interesting projection of the present into the past had occurred. We recall that the late (Syrian) by-name "Ba'albeḳi" was projected back into the early Babylonian ('Ukbarite) phase of the Mishawite movement and was appended even to the name of the sect's founder.¹⁶² In much the same way also the later (Byzantine) trend to apostasy was unhistorically projected back by Karaite polemicists into their partisan presentation of (Babylonian) Mishawite origins. It was thus that Mishawayh personally was accused by Tobias ben Moses of what was never ascribed to him by his own 'Ukbarite contemporaries: conversion to Christianity. The eleventh-century Mishawite development in the Byzantine Christian environment was mechanically associated with Mishawism's beginnings in Islamic Babylonia and projected into the life story of the ninth-century Mishawayh himself.¹⁶³

BYZANTINE KARAITE LITERATURE—A COMMUNAL UNDERTAKING

In the foregoing pages we have depicted the twin challenge which confronted the young Karaite community since its settlement on imperial territory: the challenge of native Byzantine Rabbinism and the challenge of non-Karaite sectaries who appeared on the Byzantine scene simultaneously with Karaism. It is against the background of that twin challenge that the importance of the eleventh-century Hebrew Literary

¹⁶¹ Cf. the text as quoted earlier in this chapter, 395, note 108.

¹⁶² See briefly above, 383.

¹⁶³ Possibly, it was against the Christian slant of marginal segments in the Byzantine Jewish society such as the Mishawites that Jacob ben Reuben directed the closing statement of his *Sefer ha-Osher* on the Pentateuch. Cf. the hitherto unpublished part of the Commentary on Deut. 34:12, Leiden MS Warner No. 8, 104a: לעיני כל ישראל. בעת שהיה משה עושה האותות שיעמדו כלם לפניו ויעידו לדורי דורותיהם. כי כל ישראל קטנים וגדולים ונשים ת"ר אלה גברים [צ"ל: קטנים וגדולים גברים ונשים ת"ר אלה] ראו וזו אמת תורתנו אבל הערלים קבלו מז' אנשים שיכפר [=ישו הנוצרי] לשנות ולשקר [צ"ל: לשנות ולשקר] The "four men" mentioned in the last clause bring to mind Tobias' strictures on his Mishawite contemporaries for relying on "Matthew, John, Paul, and Luke." See above, 413, and note 156.

Project of the Empire's Karaites can be perceived in its full dimensions. This Project was undoubtedly the most significant contribution of the formative years of Byzantine Karaism to the subsequent evolution of the sect.

Some of the linguistic aspects of the first Byzantine Karaite compositions were already considered earlier in this volume. They served as pointers to the social integration of the Karaite immigrants in their new environment. In that connection the conclusion was also reached that, contrary to prevalent notions, the rise of Hebrew Karaite creativity in Byzantium was motivated by *ideological incentives*; it could not have been the result of the early Byzantine Karaites' unfamiliarity with the Arabic language and of the diffusion of Hebrew among them.¹⁶⁴ The two-pronged polemics analyzed in the present chapter brought the *militant character* of the Literary Project into even sharper relief. Plainly, the establishment in Byzantium of a local Karaite literature in Hebrew was a well-calculated and well-planned *communal undertaking*.

While naturally important—indeed, indispensable—for internal reasons,¹⁶⁵ this literature was designed from the outset to serve as a fighting weapon. Consciously adopting Hebrew (accompanied by Greek glosses, as in the local Rabbanite compositions) for Karaism's official literary vehicle in the Byzantine environment, the leaders of the sect intended to counter Rabbanite accusations of the Karaites' "foreignness" on the Empire's soil and of their lack of scholarly attainment. They further endeavored to ward off through the Project the recurrent Rabbanite attempts to confuse Karaism with other sectarian shades which cropped up in Byzantine Jewry of the time. Finally, they hoped to use the Project as a springboard for becoming the foremost spokesmen of Byzantine Jewish orthodoxy against nonconformists of the Mishawite type. In the following paragraphs an attempt will be made to reconstruct the *communal organization* of this Hebrew Literary Project and to retrace the means by which it was initiated.

Setting into motion a literary and scholarly enterprise of this kind was no easy task. Its pioneering quality stands out clearly against the background of the literary creativity of medieval Jewry in general. This is true not only in relation to the past literary experience of the Karaites themselves but also as far as the contemporaneous Hebrew production of the Rabbanites was concerned. Hence [as can be gathered from extant clues], the eleventh-century Byzantine Project was launched

¹⁶⁴ Cf. above, 189–93.

¹⁶⁵ See above, 202 f., 365 f., 398 ff., and below, 450 ff.

in two directions: Compilation and Translation. At first, the erstwhile students of the Karaite academy in Jerusalem—the task-force of the Project—would take advantage of whatever material was immediately at hand, even though its quality left much to be desired. Such material consisted primarily of notes which the Constantinopolitan alumni of the Bakhtawī Court in Jerusalem had compiled for personal use, while attending, back in their student days, classes of Arabic-speaking masters.¹⁶⁶ Simultaneously, the first steps were made in the other direction, too, and a regular translation activity was initiated. Palestinian Karaite codes of law, biblical commentaries and theological tracts, composed originally in Arabic, were then made available in *full* Hebrew version to the Jewish reading public in Byzantium.

THE LITERARY PROJECT: COMPILATIONS

As for the first-mentioned direction—Compilation—the content of several Karaite manuscripts of the period is indeed described by the copyists as “taken down from the dictation” of one Jerusalem sage or another.¹⁶⁷ True, the extant fragments, written in Arabic, are mainly the work of students to whom Arabic, rather than Hebrew, was the mother-tongue.¹⁶⁸ Some of these Arabic-speaking students, in fact, had found it convenient

¹⁶⁶ On the Bakhtawī Court in Karaite Jerusalem see the brief reference above, 186 (and note 66 there).

¹⁶⁷ So, for instance, in the colophon mentioning “an additional question and the answer thereto dictated by the sage” (مسئلة وجوابها من املی الشيخ رضی الله عنه ایضا), or in the title-page introducing a text “dictated by the sage Abū Ya‘qūb” (املی), as published by me from fols. 53b and 61a, respectively, of the Sulzberger MS of al-Baṣīr’s *Masā’il wa-Jawā’ib*. Cf. my “Ibn al-Hitī and the Chronology of Joseph al-Baṣīr the Karaite,” *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1–2 (1957), 76, 77, and the discussion there, on p. 78.

Cf. further al-Hitī’s reference to a tract composed by Abū’l-Faraj Harūn (in G. Margoliouth “Ibn al-Hitī’s Chronicle of Karaite Doctors,” *JQR* [O.S.], IX [1897], 434): $\text{חם וגרות לה פי אלרר עלי אלקילין אמלא פי טנה אה א}$; cf. the recent English version by Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 233. The allusion to the “dictation,” as made by al-Hitī in this connection, was no doubt based on a colophon in the MS which the fifteenth-century Karaite chronicler had at his disposal.

¹⁶⁸ The name of one such Arabic-writing student, ‘Azaryah ben Salāḥ, was actually preserved. Cf. the text, as reproduced from fol. 27 of Brit. Mus. MS No. 596 (Or. 2570), in Margoliouth’s *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 185b. The text is a single leaf of a work on the nature of God “dictated” by the eleventh-century Joseph al-Baṣīr. The leaf was somehow bound in between the pages of al-Baṣīr’s tract on the ‘Omer (see below, 445, note 227). Margoliouth does not state explicitly whether the student who had taken down the theological text from the dictation of al-Baṣīr had also copied the larger work of the master.

even to transliterate into Arabic script the Hebrew words of biblical verses which were quoted in class in the original.¹⁶⁹ It stands to reason, nevertheless, that those students who had come in the eleventh century from Byzantium acted in a converse manner. While following with no difficulty the lectures delivered in the academy's official (Arabic) language of instruction, they did not necessarily compile all their notes in that language.

The Byzantine disciples, we remember, had already developed definite misgivings as to the appropriateness of the use of Arabic in their native country.¹⁷⁰ They would hold before their eyes the example of the Hebrew-written works of their Rabbanite compatriots whom they consistently emulated in several fields of communal and scholastic endeavor. Consequently, while listening to the Jerusalem teacher expound his lesson in Arabic, they may have been taking notes in Hebrew, thus unwittingly laying foundations for a Hebrew translation of the given lecture. This is, perhaps, the true implication of the oft-quoted apology which Tobias ben Moses inserted into the colophon of his book. Closing the single extant volume of his hitherto unpublished *Oṣar Neḥmad*, the eleventh-century leader of the Karaites in Constantinople declared:¹⁷¹

I, Tobias¹⁷² the Scribe, a Mourner of the [Order of] "Mourners of Zion," have writ-

¹⁶⁹ Cf. the illustrations in Margoliouth's *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, e.g., 182, and my comment in the above-cited article, *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1-2 (1957), 75, note 27.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. above, 202 f., 365 f.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Neubauer's *Bodleian Catalogue*, I, 58, No. 290 (also Volume of Facsimilies, Plate XXXV, second half of the page): אני טוביה הסופר האבל מאבילי ציון כתבתי זה הספר: שהוא א' מספרי אוצר הנחמד. והוא סדר כהנים. ובו דברי אדונו דוד הנשיא ז"ל והמלמ' [ד'] יפת הלוי ז"ל. והוספתי עליהם מה ששמעתי מדברי בעלי הדעת והמפרש[ים] הפותרים האלהים יחד ירצם. ובשכרו הצפון יתפצם. והרחקתי הרחוק והקרוב כדי כחי. ולא חפצתי בו להכשיל כי אם להשכיל רבים ועשיתי בו שאלות כדי כחי ויכלתי. ומי' אשאל שלא יחייבני כאש' דברתי כי לא חפצתי כי אם לטובה ואל אכשל בדברי לפני אלהי כי הוא יודע תעלומות. ואם שגיתי הוא יסלח וימחול עלי. ואתם אח[י] אל תאשימוני אם ימצא שכרש בלש[ו]ן [ד'] בין זכר ונקבה. כי אינו מקצרון יד כי אם שגגה. בי מלש[ו]ן [ד'] ישמעאל הייתי כותב אל לש' עברי. וכן אל תשענו בדברי אש' זכרתי כי אתם חכמים ונבונים וראו ואש' הוא נח כדעתכם תפשוהו. ואם תמצאו שבוש בדברי המלמדים הנזכרים באלה הספרים הנקראים קפת הרוכלים. דעו אחי כי השכוש אינו מהם כי אם ממני אבל לא בודון והאלהים יסלח להם ואותי יחד וירצם וירצני ויתן לנו ולכם לב אחד לאהבה אתו וללכת בדרכיו ויתן חלקנו עם המשכילים. ככת' והמשכילים יזהירו כוזהר [הרקיע]. וינשעים לנו מטוב נעימותיו. ככת' מה רב טובך אש' צפנת ליראיך. אמ[י] [ד'] ואמ[י] [ד'] כרוך יי לע[ו]לם אמ[י] [ד'] ואמ[י] [ד']

¹⁷² Characteristically, neither here nor in the two letters which I have reedited in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses" was the name of Tobias' father mentioned at all. Nor was it included in the acrostic of Tobias' *piyyūt* (טוב לך נאה להלל) quoted earlier in this volume, 56 (note 75), and 353. See the references above, 352, note 147. The acrostic of that *piyyūt* reads merely: טוביהו חזק. Only in the other two *piyyūtim* (listed in the same note) did Tobias mention explicitly the name of his father. Thus, the *piyyūt* which he wrote has the acrostic חזק משה מכל אמה אהבתו. Similarly, the *piyyūt* cited by Pinsker (*Likḳūṭē*, App., Note III, 139) from a manuscript copy of an ancient *hazzaniyyah* reads: [נפשו בטוב תלין חרעו יירש: ארץ-הלהי כ"ה יז] אמן.

ten this book,¹⁷³ which is one of my books [or: one of the books of] *The Delightful Treasure (Oṣar han-Neḥmad)*.¹⁷⁴ It is [a commentary on] the Priestly Lore [i.e., on Leviticus]. It contains the sayings of our Prince, the Patriarch David [ben Bo'az], of blessed memory, and of the Teacher, Yefeth [ben 'Alī] Halleṽī, blessed be his memory.¹⁷⁵

In this connection, the inconsistency apparent in the spelling of Tobias' name also deserves to be recorded. Thus, the colophon to *Oṣar Neḥmad*, the aforementioned private letters, and the *piyyūṣ* cited first in the present note all spell the Hebrew *Ṭōbiyyah* with a *hē*. The two other *piyyūṣim*, however, as well as several passages in the *Oṣar Neḥmad* text itself, spell the name with an *aleph*-ending (*Ṭōbiyyā*). While responsibility for the inconsistency displayed in the exegetical text might easily be shifted to the copyists, the variants in the *piyyūṣim* are unquestionably Tobias' own. To be sure, the difficulty is not very serious; both spellings are well-represented in medieval Hebrew literature and neither of them is, by medieval standards, incorrect. Since, as can be gathered from Tobias' private letters, his preferable spelling was with a *hē*, the *aleph*-variant in some of the *piyyūṣim* could perhaps be explained as an exercise in acrostics. Neither must too much weight be attached to the fact that precisely those texts in which the patronymic detail is absent spell *Ṭōbiyyah* with a *hē*, whereas in the *piyyūṣim* in which Tobias introduced himself as "ben Moses" the name appears with an *aleph*. The material is too scanty to serve as sufficient basis for drawing conclusions. The simultaneity of the division in spelling and the division in citing (or not citing) the name of Tobias' father may, for all we know, be purely coincidental.

Nevertheless, the whole problem merits further study, especially since chronological difficulties arising from incorrectly linking Tobias with Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, and the confusion of identity stemming from the five different epithets conferred on Tobias (*abel*, *'ōbed*, *baḳī*, *maskil*, *ma'tiḳ*; see below, 449), gave rise to a theory of the existence of two Tobiases. Thus, the eighteenth-century East European Karaite bibliographer, Simḥah Lucki, listed separately a *Ṭōbiyyah hab-Baḳī* and a *Ṭōbiyyah ben Moses*. Cf. his *Oraḥ Ṣaddiḳim*, 21b. A somewhat similar line, we remember, was suggested in the nineteenth century by Firkowicz; see above, 325, note 60.

¹⁷³ On Tobias' status of 'Mourner' see our discussion below, 427 ff. As for the term 'Scribe' (הסופר), Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 13, understood it to mean "Verfasser des Buches." Such interpretation is both unwarranted and, considering the context, unnecessary. There can be no doubt that Tobias referred here to his scribal *profession*. Indeed, a suggestion to this effect was already advanced in an earlier connection by Jacob Mann. Cf. his *Texts and Studien*, I, 374. Mann, independent of the present colophon, surmised that Tobias, when on a visit to Egypt, did some copying of books for his benefactor, Abraham at-Tustarī. "From the handwriting we can see [says Mann] that he was a professional scribe." Cf. more on this in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 7, note 18.

Incidentally, Neubauer, who first communicated Tobias' colophon, preferred to call the author of *Oṣar Neḥmad* "Tobbiah hasofer." See *Bodl. Catalogue*, I, 57, and *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 55. In the last-mentioned work he was not even sure yet whether "Tobbiah hasofer" was identical with "Tobbiah hamaatik."

¹⁷⁴ See below, 435 ff., the discussion of the meaning of this sentence.

¹⁷⁵ On the exceptional respect of Tobias to the Patriarch David, in spite of his and the other Mourners' opposition to the Patriarchate as an institution, see my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 19–25 (and note 54). There also, p. 21, the Mourners' idealization of the "Teachers" is explained. (See also above, 310, note 41.)

As for the expression "of blessed memory," it is to be doubted whether the original colophon contained the Rabbinic לְיָדֵינוּ. It stands to reason that Tobias used the formula יָדֵינוּ [אֲנִי], as above, 227, note 44, or below, 424, note 192, or in Letter I, reedited in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses." That formula was preferred in

To the [sayings of these sages] I have added what I had heard of the pronouncements of the Philosophers (*ba'alē had-da'ath*) and the Commentators [and] Interpreters [of Scripture] (*ham-mepharshim hap-pōtherim*), may God be pleased with them all¹⁷⁶ and may He desire [to include] them in the reward He has reserved [for the Righteous].

I have removed, as much as I could, that which seemed far [from reasonable], and have brought forth that which is most probable. [For] I did not intend to cause [people] to stumble through this [book], but to enlighten the many.¹⁷⁷ I [further] formulated here [a series of] questions [and answers], to the extent of my power and ability. I pray to God that He should not hold me guilty for what I may have said [here], for my intentions were good; [I pray] that I shall not have stumbled in my sayings in the presence of my Lord, for He knoweth the secrets [of the heart].¹⁷⁸ And if I have erred, may He forgive me and pardon [my sin].

Now, ye, O my brethren, do not accuse me if there be found [here] an erroneous use of the masculine or feminine gender; for [such error was made] not because of inadequacy but through inadvertence, since I have been writing from the language of Ishmael into the Hebrew tongue. Likewise, do not rely on my sayings which I have introduced [here],¹⁷⁹ for you are wise and learned. See [for yourselves], and accept whatever seems acceptable to you. And should you find an error in the words of the Teachers who have been quoted [herewith] in these books which bear the title *The Peddlers' Bag* (*Quppath ha-Rōkhelim*),¹⁸⁰ know ye, my brethren, that it is not the Teachers but I who must be held responsible for it. Yet, [such error happened] through no evil intention.

May God forgive them and me, and may He be pleased with them and me.¹⁸¹ May He give you and a heart united in the love of Him and [in the desire] to walk in His paths. May He allot our portion with the intellectuals (*ham-maskilim*), even as it is written [Dan. 12:3], "And the intellectuals (*ham-maskilim*)¹⁸² shall shine as the brightness [of the firmament]." May He delight us with the goodness of His pleasures,¹⁸³ as

the early Karaite texts, which were still influenced by the Arabic *raḥimahu 'llāhu*. The change must have been due to the copyist who lived apparently several generations after Tobias. (The date of the copy at hand is unknown.)

¹⁷⁶ On the Arabic counterpart of that formula see my comments in *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1–2 (1957), 79 (and notes). This formula was applied, as a rule, after the names of deceased persons. See, however, below, note 181.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Dan. 11:33–35, 12:3, which belong to the standard thesaurus of Karaite quotations and denote the Karaites' idealization of intellectualism. Cf. in the last paragraph of the colophon. Also the pun להשכיל > להשכיל, going back to Dan. 11:33 and 11:35, was very common in Karaite literature. Cf., for instance, the text above, 211, note 14, in which the pun was invoked by the Daniel al-Ḳūmisi school against 'Anan ben David himself.

¹⁷⁸ Ps. 44:22.

¹⁷⁹ This phrase, ascribed to 'Anan ben David, is discussed above, 210 ff., esp. 212, note 16.

¹⁸⁰ For this expression see below, 440 f., and note 219. Cf. also above, 245, note 90.

¹⁸¹ Contrary to the accepted pattern, the verb רצה, corresponding to the Arabic رضى, is not used here in the sense familiar from the formula appended to the names of the dead. See above, note 176.

¹⁸² I deviate here from the regular English translation—"And they that are wise"—in order to render the term *maskilim* in its peculiar Karaite connotation.

¹⁸³ At the beginning of line 30 of Letter I, sent from Jerusalem to Fuṣṭāṭ in the early months of 1041, Tobias also used the same expression. The words at the end of line 29 there have faded completely, yet the possibility should not be excluded that the

it is written [Ps. 31:20], "Oh how abundant is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee." Amen, and Amen. Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and Amen [Ps. 89:53].

GENESIS OF HEBREW KARAITE CREATIVITY

The above colophon has often been referred to in modern discussions. It has long been known to students of Karaitica through Neubauer's quotation in the Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian and through a photographic reproduction in the Volume of Facsimilies accompanying that Catalogue.

The emphasis in such references varied from case to case, according to the specific reasons for which these references were invoked. Thus, in some cases, scholars would stress especially Tobias' declaration of membership in the Order of the "Mourners of Zion" (of which more later). Other scholars, bent on digging up "influences," would magnify Tobias' frank listing of his sources and would ultimately underrate his own creative role in the book. Tobias honestly admitted that he had built his Commentary primarily on a review of the two main exegetical schools of Palestinian Karaism, the school of David ben Bo'az and the school of Yefeth ben 'Ali. By highlighting this admission, the scholars would often make it overshadow Tobias' original contribution. This contribution, consisting, as we know, of linguistic discussions and glosses, exegetical Questions-and-Answers, legal decisions and interesting polemics, has abundantly come to the fore all through this volume.¹⁸⁴

Now, the conventional entries in the colophon are of no special interest to us in the present connection. Thus, we should hardly pause to consider Tobias' twice-repeated declaration of responsibility in which (not unlike the prefaces of modern writers) he released the old masters from sharing in any error detectable in his book. Nor are we concerned here with his idealistic allusions to Karaite intellectualism and piety, drawn from the standard Karaite thesaurus of scriptural quotations. In the same vein, we may leave aside and dismiss as unoriginal Tobias' warning to his "wise and learned" flock "not to rely" on his views. Clearly, the warning repeated merely the well-known Karaite exhortation in favor of the individual's right to interpret Scripture independently. Such exhortations, we remember, unhistorically ascribed even to the Founding Fathers of the sect, had become characteristic traits of Karaite ideo-

original wording of the letter corresponded to our present phrase. Mann (*Texts and Studies*, I, 385) misread the text there and copied מימתי for מימתי. Cf. my note *ad loc.*, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," Appendix, 33.

¹⁸⁴ See also our comments above, 258 f.

logy ever since the victory of individualistic revisionism in the tenth century.¹⁸⁵

But it may prove highly instructive to dwell at length on four passages in the colophon which bear directly on our reconstruction. As with earlier cases, the study of the whole manuscript of *Oṣar Neḥmad* adds perspective to the examination of these four passages, too; it helps us discover new implications which had otherwise been blurred by the conventional approach to the colophon. I propose to show presently that the sincere personal statement embedded in the colophon covers more than a mere description of the structure of the Commentary. Since Tobias was the initiator and the chief builder of the Literary Project, his *personal sentiments* (expressed in the colophon) may serve as precious clues to the *general creative process* by which eleventh-century Hebrew Karaite literature was brought into being in Byzantium.

In the first place, the passage containing Tobias' plea to his readers attracts our attention. The man who passed into Karaite history as "The Translator"¹⁸⁶ asks indulgence for the sporadic errors of grammar that may have stolen into his Hebrew exposition. Such errors, Tobias implores his readers, should not be held against him as proof that he was unequal to the task. They are no more than *lapsus calami*, since he "was writing from the language of Ishmael into the Hebrew tongue."¹⁸⁷ Now, the prevalent scholarly opinion interprets this awkward expression as Tobias' way of saying that he "was translating from the Arabic into Hebrew." The implication is, then, that, in the eleventh-century state of Hebrew, Tobias could not think of a better equivalent for the verb 'to translate' than the root *K-Th-B*, 'writing (from one language to another)'.¹⁸⁸

This interpretation is far from satisfactory both on general and on linguistic grounds. First, *Oṣar Neḥmad* is not a translation in the accepted sense, and Tobias should hardly be expected to wish to present it as such. Secondly, a careful study of Tobias' linguistic equipment definitely militates against the aforementioned solution.¹⁸⁹ All through the three

¹⁸⁵ Cf. our comments on this above, 215 f.

¹⁸⁶ See below, 449 f.

¹⁸⁷ כי מלש' [ן] ישמעאל הייתי בו תב אל לש' עברי.

¹⁸⁸ Cf., for instance, Steinschneider's reaction to Tobias' statement (*Hebr. Übersetzungen*, II, 941, note 256): "Fehlte ihm noch der Ausdruck העתיק?" Also Poznański (*Oṣar Yisrael*, V, 13a) explains, without much ado, the phrase in question as היינו שהעתיק מערבית.

¹⁸⁹ To be sure, in rejecting the accepted interpretation as incompatible with the vocabulary of Tobias, I do not intend to argue that the use itself of *K-Th-B* for

hundred pages of *Oṣar Neḥmad* I could find not a single instance of the use of *K-Th-B* in the connotation suggested above. Indeed, important clues can be gleaned to the contrary. Thus, to give an illustration, in the hitherto unpublished portion of the Commentary, Tobias discusses the Saadyanic method of translating the Pentateuch into Arabic. In these critical comments he uses all along the root *T-R-G-M*, to mean 'literal translation (from one language to another),' in much the same way as it is used today. In addition, he falls back sometimes on the widely used root *P-Th-R*, although its accepted meaning in medieval texts is 'interpretation (of content)' rather than purely literal 'translation.' At any rate, nowhere in that methodological exposé does the verb *K-Th-B*—'writing,' pure and simple—appear at all.¹⁹⁰

'translation' was unknown. Cf. on the subject L. Zunz, "'Verfassen' und 'übersetzen' hebräisch ausgedrückt," reprinted from *ZDMG*, XXV (1871), 435–48, in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, III, §v., 50–67, esp. 62.

A study of the lexical scope, the application of words, and other linguistic aspects of the literary creations of Tobias ben Moses and his colleagues is still a desideratum. Some preliminary observations were already made by Pinsker, P. F. Frankl, Steinschneider and Poznański, but they were limited mainly to the analysis of the influence of Arabic on Tobias' Hebrew terminology. It is to be hoped that present-day specialists in the field will turn to this Karaite material, too, and include it in their research. They will, I am sure, find the results of such studies extremely rewarding.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 91b ff. Only a brief sample of that discussion can be given here. It deals with the inadequacy of literal rendering into Arabic and Greek of certain Hebrew terms (the actual object of discussion is the Hebrew *heleb* [=fat] in the first chapters of Leviticus). Tobias illustrates his point by drawing attention to the equally difficult case of the Divine Name. There again a literal translation is out of question. Each language has its own term for "God," which is not a translation of the equivalent term in another language. Only attributes can be translated. Throughout that discussion Tobias uses the verbs *T-R-G-M* and *P-Th-R* for 'translation' proper:
השם אש' הוא מלש' [ן] הקדש אין אנהנו פותרים כלש' ישמעאל ולא בלש' יונים אבל נקרא אותו בשם הקדש בעבור שידוע בספור צורתו לא בסת' [רון] שמו. וזה כמ' שם י' אש' יקרא בחלוף אותיותיו ולא ידעו א[ן]ת בעלי לש' ישמעאל ולא חיונים והם פ[ן]תרים אותו בלשונם. ואין אנהנו מתרגמים אותו על אמנתו בלש' ישמעאל ולא בלש' חיונים למען כי אין לו כלשונם שם כמותו אבל בספר סיניטקיסטו [?] למען כי הוא אלוה הוא במע[נה] רבריהם שיאמ' כלש' ישמעאל אלה עז וגל [אלה עז וגל]. ובעלי חיונים אומ' תיאוש [θεός] ואינו אצלינו מתורגם יע[ני] י' ית' כמ' שדי אש' חרגמנתו הרי ובלש' ישמעאל אלכאפי [الكافي]. ובלש' יון איקנוש [צ'ל: אויקונומוש = οἰκονόμος] יע' אש' הוא מכלכל לברואיו. ורחום והדומ' להם כן על זה הדרך. אבל הוא ממנו אנהנו הידיעה שנוע בו בספור באש' אמרנו ולהיות קרוב אל השומע. וכן אין בלש' ישמ' [עאל] ולא בלש' יון שם יסגיל אלה הה' חתיכות באש' יסגילם בשם מן התו' [רה] והוא חלב. ואם אין להם שם לאלה הה' והי' להסגילם לא יחייב לנו שנתרגם חלב אש' הוא שם בלל אלה החתיכות בלש' א' [חד] מן הגוים. אבל נאמ' למי שישאל לנו על פתרונו כי אין לו בלשונם פתרון למען כי הם לא ידעו הסגלת זה הכלל בשם ויוציאוהו בלשונם על זה הכלל. ואם לא יהיה להם בלשונם שם לא יהיה לחלב אש' הוא שם הכלל שם בלשונם שיתרגם בו בלש' ית' לא תראה כי כלל המתרגמ' והפותרים והמבינים בכתב י' יעצרו and *P-Th-R* for 'exegesis':
בלבם כי הוא רבר י' ית' לא יעביר א[חד] מהם להחליף דבר ממנו. אבל יזכרו א[ן]תו באש' הוא אות ראות ומלה ומלה אהל יתרגמו. והפתרון אחרי

As I visualize the stratified construction of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project, Tobias' clumsy expression stands out as a most natural and accurate statement of fact. What Tobias was really conveying to his readers was precisely this genesis of Karaite Hebrew creativity in Byzantium which we endeavor to trace in the present analysis. He was calling attention to the difficulties besetting Byzantine Karaite leadership in search for the proper material to be utilized in the early stage of the Project. The available translations [Tobias explained to his flock], such as those woven into his own *Oṣar Neḥmad*, were not produced with the express purpose of rendering the Arabic texts into Hebrew. They were created inadvertently, *while* "writing from the language of Ishmael into the Hebrew tongue," i.e., *while* jotting down in Hebrew that which was expounded and quoted in class in the Arabic language.

TRILINGUAL AMALGAM

Curiously, Tobias did not raise in his apology the broader issue of form and style which baffled modern students on perusal of his *Oṣar Neḥmad* and his other writings. While worried about a possible slip on the proper use "of the masculine or feminine gender,"¹⁹¹ Tobias appears quite at ease about the characteristic admixture of Hebrew, Arabic and Greek which made nineteenth-century German Jewish scholars shudder at his compositions.

Especially puzzling seem, at first glance, the instances in which an occasional Arabic word or a whole Arabic clause would be left intact in the midst of the Hebrew text. Mnemonic or indexical reasons could be suggested perhaps in the case of those untranslated Arabic passages which formed the opening phrases of quotations from the Arabic-writing masters.¹⁹² There is, however, no justification for the other occurrences. Some of the latter, indeed, involved the simplest and most inconspicuous expressions or words;¹⁹³ clearly these were not left untranslated because

On the use of the verbs *T-R-G-M* and *P-Th-R* for 'translating' see the references from the Hebrew literature of the period, as offered by Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III, 63 f.

¹⁹¹ ואחם אחי אל תאשימוני אם ימצא שבוש בלש' בין זכר ונקבה.

¹⁹² Cf., for instance, Bodl. MS No. 290, 60a: וזאת תורת ירמאל. וזאת תורת וזאת תורת. דע כי הזכיר בנו הפרש'—המנחה. אעלם אן תנא פי הדא אל פרשה.

¹⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 64a: והדא והיו כהנים משנים לו. והדא. Or, 68b: יחייב שלא יחייב על כהן גדול יקריב זאת המנחה אם יאכל אותו כבר עבר על ב' מצוות פאן. Or, again, 79a: מהם אדא. וכן החטאת והאשם לא תקבל א' [חד] מהם אדא. כאן שוגג יחייב עליו ב' קרבנות וכן החטאת והאשם לא תקבל א' [חד] מהם אדא. אכל מנה [צ"ל: אבל מנה] בזולת העת המונבל בו.

of mnemonical considerations or because of the difficulty in supplying the right Hebrew equivalent for the original Arabic wording.

Scholars like P. F. Frankl and others blamed, first of all, the dimensions of the Project for the striking negligence of form and style exhibited by the early Byzantine Karaite creations: such tremendous production [they argued] could not but lower the quality of the literary products.¹⁹⁴ They further ascribed this negligence to haste, since [so they reasoned] propaganda material had to be prepared with utmost speed in order to be distributed to Karaite missionaries about to leave on their pious errands. Such reasoning was well in line with these scholars' general evaluation of Karaite propaganda as the primary force propelling the spread of Karaism outside of Palestine in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. They believed that the Palestinian Karaite authorities themselves sponsored these translations and that the Byzantine students acted merely as agents in disseminating the Jerusalem doctrines in their native lands.¹⁹⁵

That this "missionary theory" in general can no longer be accepted as a serious factor in Karaite expansion in the period under discussion has been amply demonstrated in Chapter II of the present study.¹⁹⁶ Hence, the theory that missionary "haste" affected the language and style of contemporaneous Karaite literature may also be summarily rejected. Obviously, the explanation for the absence of linguistic purism in the early Byzantine Karaite compilations and translations must be sought in the very reconstruction presented here. What the initiators of the Project had at hand, after all, was not a literary output intended *a priori* for presentation to the broader public, but private note-books compiled by students while in class. The criteria of such notes varied then, as they do today, from student to student. Some of these materials were, apparently, interlinear translations of Arabic texts, the preparation of which was sporadically assigned to (or undertaken by) students of the Jerusalem academy.¹⁹⁷ Others (e.g., those underlying *Oṣar Neḥmad*) would be

¹⁹⁴ Consult Frankl's chapter on the "Charakteristik des karäischen Übersetzers Tobija hamma'atik," in his *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 10–13, esp. 11. The translation activity, says Frankl, was "in quantitativer Hinsicht eine so gewaltige Leistung, dass wir uns nicht wundern dürfen, dass die Qualität derselben eine geringere wurde."

¹⁹⁵ For this theory of "Hast und Schnelligkeit," see Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 13. See also above, 190, note 80.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. above, 79–83.

¹⁹⁷ This has been suggested by Frankl with regard to *Sefer Ne'imoth*, which was Tobias' Hebrew version of al-Baṣīr's *Muḥtawī*. See *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 13.

accumulated gradually and systematically by a gifted student who hoped to use them as *collectanea* for some future independent research.

Whatever the case, they all could not fail to be dominated by such factors as convenience and haste. Haste, that is, not of the kind suggested by Frankl, but the simple, prosaic haste of a student who is anxious to get down on paper the maximum of what the lecturer was expounding in class. Such a situation seldom made the student pause to consider linguistic purity and beauty of style. Occasionally, then, the student would record a word or a phrase in the original Arabic, the way the lecturer said it. Similarly, he would hastily append a Greek gloss here and there, whenever a difficult Arabic term was employed in the class discussion.

It is highly instructive that Tobias did not feel apologetic about this trilingual amalgam of some of his texts but was clearly jittery about the quality of his Hebrew. The Byzantine Karaite leader was aware, on the one hand, of his coreligionists' sensitivity about the effective presentation of their case *in Hebrew*. This sensitivity was but a corollary of a fact which they realized well—namely, that Hebrew was as yet the weakest element in the Karaites' linguistic equipment in Byzantium. Since, however, it was precisely Hebrew which served as the vehicle of Byzantine Rabbinism's scholarly creativity and of its anti-Karaite polemics, they naturally expected their spokesman to display adequate knowledge and correct use of that language.

On the other hand, Tobias knew that he might count on the indulgence of his flock toward the *general* method by which his material was compiled. For neither were the difficulties confronting the Project a secret to the intelligent Karaite reader in the Empire nor was that reader expected to share with the nineteenth-century German purists the horror of "jenes monströse Gemengsel dreier Sprachen."¹⁹⁸ As concluded in Chapter IV, above, that reader himself was in the eleventh century still to a great extent trilingual.¹⁹⁹

PALESTINIAN NOTE-BOOKS

Of the four passages, then, in Tobias' colophon which might be viewed as pointers to the early stage of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project, the passage we have analyzed first dealt with *method*. This passage allowed an insight into the process by which Hebrew excerpts of Pales-

¹⁹⁸ See above, 193, note 89.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. 192 f., above.

tinian Arabic texts came into being through the somewhat accidental mediation of Byzantine Karaite students. This process, as we have seen, could not fail to affect the literary, linguistic and structural quality of the Karaites' first Hebrew performance in the Byzantine environment.

The other sentence in the colophon, to be discussed now, pertains to the *place* in which the early Hebrew creativity of the Empire's Karaites was initiated. It is in this manner that, I believe, we ought to understand Tobias' emphasis on being "a Mourner from the [Order of] 'Mourners of Zion'."²⁰⁰ Now, as mentioned before, this brief sentence, constituting the opening bars of the colophon of *Oṣar Neḥmad*, has frequently been invoked by scholars. However, the evidence it was invariably called upon to furnish was limited to that which is *overtly* stated in the text—namely, that Tobias, the Byzantine student, was "a Mourner among the 'Mourners of Zion'." No thought had been given to the broader *implications* of this personal statement, nor was the statement considered within the general context of the colophon and against the background of the customary procedure found in other documents.

The truth of the matter is that the inclusion of that statement in the colophon presents a rather complicated problem. For, on the one hand, there can be no doubt that Tobias' leadership and guidance of the Literary Project (of which his *Oṣar Neḥmad* was part and parcel) fall in the period subsequent to his return from Palestine; his student years as "Mourner" in Jerusalem were by then already past. On the other hand, once outside of Palestine, Tobias gave no evidence of maintaining his erstwhile Palestinian title of "Mourner." This he did perhaps partly for *personal* reasons. As we know, he left the Holy City a bitter man, disgusted with the petty politics of the Jerusalem Karaite Patriarchate.²⁰¹ But he must have acted, first of all, in conformity with *general* custom.

It stands to reason that the *conditio sine qua non* for maintaining the rank of a Karaite "Mourner" in the eleventh century was to actually stay (if not necessarily settle permanently) in Palestine. With the Jerusalem Karaite center in full bloom, a merely symbolic observance of "mourning" in the Diaspora hardly entitled one to style himself a "Mourner;" this was to become the custom of pietists only later, after the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders (e.g., the twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite, Yehūdah Hadassi). At any rate, Tobias himself no longer mentioned "mourning" in the epistle he wrote to an Egyptian benefactor

200 אגני טוביה הסופר האביל מאבילי ציון.

201 See on this my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses."

some years after having returned from Jerusalem.²⁰² Nor did later Byzantine generations remember him as *he-Abel*, although they had preserved a recollection of his erstwhile status of “Mourner” when referring to him as *ha-‘Obed*, i.e., “The Servant [of God].”²⁰³

In the face of the above, the fact that Tobias ben Moses deemed it necessary or advisable to recall his Palestinian past when offering *Ošar Nehmad* to the Byzantine Karaite public is not devoid of difficulty. What seemed to be a natural signature, say, in letters sent from Jerusalem

²⁰² See my note 60 to “The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses,” 27 f.

²⁰³ For some of the later references to Tobias as *ha-‘Obed*, see below, 449, note 234. I do not know of any instance in which Tobias was later referred to also as *he-Abel*.

The relation between the two titles is still to be studied in greater detail. It is my impression, on review of the extant material, that in eleventh-century Palestine proper *ha-‘Obed* and *he-Abel* were used interchangeably to denote *actual* membership in the Order of *Abelē Šiyyon*. Thus, in Letter I, line 6 (cf. my “The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses,” Appendix, 31), Tobias speaks of himself as ממוני אבי טרביה העובר. Yet in the address of the same letter he says: ממוני טרביה האבלי (see next note). Now, on leaving the Holy Land, the erstwhile “Mourner” would not anymore invoke the title *he-Abel*. Apparently, however, it was common practice to retain the title *ha-‘Obed*, much in the same vein as did Karaite pilgrims to Jerusalem in later centuries when they called themselves “*Yerūshalmī*.”

People bearing the title *ha-‘Obed* became a common sight in the Karaite communities of Egypt and Byzantium in the latter half of the eleventh century. These were returning students, who, prompted by personal or communal reasons (of which see briefly above, 188, note 71) or by the general decline of the Jerusalem center (cf. the Epilogue to the present volume), settled in their native communities and occupied there positions of leadership. The names of some of these leaders were indeed preserved. Consult, for instance, the list in the closing section of *Hillūḳ haḳ-Ḳara’im we ha-Rabbanim* (Pinsker, *Liḳḳūḳē*, App. XII, 106), which reaches as far as the last years of the eleventh century. Compiled some time in the twelfth century, after the extinction of the Jerusalem *Abelē Šiyyon* Order, the list, characteristically, does not any longer apply the title *he-Abel* to any of the enumerated scholars, although the membership of some of them in the Order, back in the tenth or the eleventh centuries, is not subject to doubt. On the other hand, it does record three names with the title *ha-‘Obed*. Significantly, these names appear only in the last three lines of the 19-line roll of honor; obviously, they belong to personalities who were active outside Palestine in the closing decades of the eleventh century, after having fled or left Jerusalem and returned to their native lands.

Not until a quarter or so of the twelfth century had passed was the title *he-Abel* restored to use. But its new connotation (discussed in my paper on “Yehūdah Hadassī and the Crusades”) was now different from its tenth- and eleventh-century antecedents. “Mourning” ceased to be hinged on actual sojourn in Palestine and on membership in the (nonexistent) Order of the “Mourners.” See briefly the Epilogue, below.

The same was true of *Rabbanite* pietists of the time, as can be gathered from the *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela. While the title was restored by *diasporic* ascetics, (e.g., Yemen, Germany), *Palestinian* pietists would no longer call themselves “Mourners.” Thus, the pious Rabbanite recluse of Byzantine origin, R. Abraham al-Ḳōšťanḳinī, whom Benjamin met in Jerusalem in the late 1160’s (i.e., paralleling the last years of

by Tobias, the young Byzantine student, at a time when his membership in the Order of the "Mourners of Zion" was an undeniable fact,²⁰⁴ ceased to be natural when repeated in later years by Tobias, the ripe leader of Byzantine Karaism; indeed, it was clearly at variance with contemporaneous diasporic procedure to which Tobias himself is known to have adhered.

There seem to be only two ways of explaining Tobias' deviation from the accustomed pattern, as apparent in the colophon under discussion; either of these ways, to be sure, falls well in line with our general reconstruction of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project. The simplest explanation, of course, is that which assumes that the whole extant volume of *Oṣar Neḥmad*—including the crucial colophon—was finished

Hadassi's life), was known merely as *he-ḥasid* or *hap-parūsh*, despite the fact that in his earlier days "he was [a member] of the 'Mourners of Jerusalem'." Cf. ed. Asher, I, 39 f.; Eng. tr., 74 f. (J. Praver's inference from the text at hand that Abraham was no longer alive when Benjamin visited Jerusalem is, in the light of the above comments, unnecessary. Cf. his "The Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem" [Hebrew], *Zion*, XI [1945-46], 47 f., note 56. There is no reason to prefer, as Praver does, the Casanattense version, *ספר ל' הדברים האלה*, while *all* other versions [including the two MSS which I could check now in Jerusalem] read *ספר ל' הדברים האלה*. Cf. the apparatus in ed. Adler and ed. Grünhut *ad loc.* R. Abraham must have been in his eighties then, which partly explains the respect he commanded among Jews and non-Jews alike.)

For the sake of completeness, it is worth noting in this connection another statement by an erstwhile Byzantine Karaite student of the Jerusalem academy. In that statement (reproduced by Pinsker, *Likḥūtē*, App., Note X, 173; Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 146, No. 686; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 290, note 10; Assaf-Mayer, *Sefer hay-Yishshüb*, II, 45b, No. 11; and others) the pious Byzantine declares: *וגלוי לאל שלא היה חפצי בכתיב הספר הזה אלא להתקרב בו אל אלהי השמים אשר עשה עמי חסדים גדולים והשכין אותי בירושלים עיר הקדש איע"עס [=אלהים יכוננה עד עולם סלה]. ולא אני מקטני ירושלים אלא קטן שבקטנים הצעירים אשר למדתי מהם ומה שראיתי בספריהם חקקתי וכתיבתי אותם.*

Now, the identity of the writer is unknown (see the literature on this, as cited in my Hebrew study in *Tarbiz*, XXV [1955-56], 52, note 28), but his Byzantine origin cannot be subject to doubt. The book, *Marpē' la-'Ešem*, abounds in Greek words, and, according to Mann, "reads not as a translation from the Arabic but as an original composition." Mann was even inclined to identify the author with Tobias ben Moses (cf. his *Texts and Studies*, II, 290 f., note 10). But, while it is obvious that this Byzantine Karaite once lived and studied in Jerusalem, that chapter in his life was closed by now. He looked back at his Jerusalem days as a "grace from God," and humbly remembered his past as a student of the Jerusalem masters (note the Past Tense in all the verbs!). Hence, whoever he was, and if ever he belonged to the *Abelē Šiyyoñ* Order at all, the Byzantine Karaite author of *Marpē' La-'Ešem* quite correctly refrained at a later stage from invoking his erstwhile title of *Abel*.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Tobias' signature in Letter I, reproduced in my "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," Appendix, 34: *ממני טוביה האבל שואל שלומך מן עיר הקדש חבנה ות' (כונן) [במ' (הרה) אמ' [ן]*. Cf. also the standard expressions of "mourning" in lines 6-8 and 10-16 of the same letter.

in Palestine when Tobias was still a student and active member in the Order of "Mourners." In the colophon, the young author asked indulgence of his friends and readers back home (to whom he may have been sending his note-books) for the occasional flaws in grammar, content, etc. These flaws, he insisted, were the result of the way in which the material was taking shape in Jerusalem. Tobias had no reason to change the colophon later, when his book was integrated in the general Project and put at the disposal of broader circles of readers.

An alternative solution might be sought in attributing the colophon to Tobias' later years of activity as leader of the Karaite movement in Byzantium. The Byzantine scholar composed it when placing his Jerusalem note-books at the service of the Constantinopolitan community. He must have felt that the nature of his work—half a translation of classical discussions and texts, half a collection of his own comments thereon—needed an explanation. In the appended apology, therefore, he called attention to the youthful character of the work. He stressed that the compiled material consisted of what he had studied and excerpted in Hebrew translation at the Palestinian academy, and that the compilation was made while he was "a Mourner of the [Order of] 'Mourners of Zion'," i.e., back in his student days in Jerusalem. He asked his flock to keep this crude, non-literary origin of the *Oṣar* in mind before accusing him, the mature and independent scholar, of linguistic or scholastic inadequacy.

Whichever solution may seem more plausible regarding the sequence of events, the fact remains unaltered: the earliest Hebrew creations of Byzantine Karaites were conceived in Palestine. There they grew latently, slowly accumulating between the pages of private note-books which were compiled by gifted Karaite students from Byzantium. There, in Jerusalem, they continued to mold their new, initially primitive (Hebrew) vessels into which the old (Arabic) content would be poured. There, finally, they lent novel shapes to the amassed material through a constant process of absorption, elimination and creative distension. True, these shapes were rather unwieldy, at first. The gradual, unplanned process of building up the material made them inevitably clumsy and disproportionate. The expositions would be prolix and tortuously repetitious in one section, knotty and incomprehensibly condensed in another, just as were the academic lectures or texts underlying them. But, what really mattered was that they were there at hand, and, their crude form notwithstanding, they were rich in content and broad in scope—the best

and the latest which Karaite learning had produced in Palestine during the tenth and the eleventh centuries.

“OSAR NEHMAD”

To sum up: Some time in the 50’s of the eleventh century, prompted by incentives stemming from the Byzantine environment, the Hebrew Translation and Compilation Project was launched in Byzantium. Lacking well-arranged original manuscripts and ready-made translations, the former students of the Jerusalem academy naturally resorted to their private note-books and made them the foundation of the Project. Themselves now leaders and teachers of the Empire’s growing sectarian community, they put these rough, partly incomplete, and by all standards hardly adequate materials at the disposal of local students and scribes. Thus sprang into significance that collective Hebrew production which was inadvertently conceived in the first half of the eleventh century in the Jerusalem academy. Byzantine Karaism’s literature in the Hebrew language was born.

A note-book, as note-books go, is limited by its size. Hence, *collectanea* on one and the same theme—e.g., materials for a commentary on one Book of Scripture—must frequently have extended over several note-books. It is thus that I understand the third passage in the colophon relevant to our discussion. In that passage, we remember, Tobias introduced the extant manuscript as “one of my books [*or*: one of the books of] *Oṣar han-Nehmad*. It is a commentary [he explained] on the Priestly Teaching (i.e., on Leviticus).”²⁰⁵ Scholars have interpreted this description to mean that, while the extant part indeed deals with Leviticus, *Oṣar Nehmad* as a whole “extended to the entire Pentateuch.”²⁰⁶ The other volumes simply got lost.

There is, of course, no way of *proving*—as long as none of the lost volumes has been recovered—that Tobias did *not* intend to encompass the whole Pentateuch in his exegetical composition. Nevertheless, it seems most plausible, both on general and on textual grounds, to assert that this composition was limited to Leviticus alone. Indeed, if the extant 300-page manuscript of *Oṣar Nehmad*, covering solely the first ten chapters of Leviticus, exemplifies Tobias’ standard method of coping with material, one could convincingly argue that extending such compila-

²⁰⁵ זה הספר שהוא א' מספרי ארצו הנחמד. והוא סדר כהנים

²⁰⁶ So, for instance, Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadia*, 62, note 2. See also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 290, note 10.

tion to all the Five Books of Moses was a feat well-nigh impossible physically. Should Tobias have followed his exceptionally broad design and long-winded exposition when dealing with the rest of the Pentateuch as well, he would have had to fill literally scores of additional volumes before taking leave of Moses in the Plains of Moab. Truly, one is tempted to think that it was this slow-motion kind of exegesis, characteristic of *Oṣar Neḥmad*, that made later generations prefer abridgments—even abridgments of the clumsy type of *Sefer ha-'Osher*, for instance—to the high-standard, yet tedious, display of scholarship in Tobias' Commentary.²⁰⁷ This is perhaps why, as we said, all volumes, save one, of *Oṣar Neḥmad* were allowed to fall into oblivion, notwithstanding the great respect reserved for their author by all subsequent schools of Karaite law. This is also why the only extant volume of the work was preserved in a single manuscript. *Oṣar Neḥmad* simply ceased to be copied.

My assertion that *Oṣar Neḥmad* was a multivolume commentary solely on Leviticus falls well in line also with the broader aspects of its literary origin. As already stressed above, Tobias' texts and comments compiled in *Oṣar Neḥmad* were but a superstructure to the comprehensive course on the subject that was given in the Karaite academy of Jerusalem. The theme of such a course was carefully chosen. Karaism was a militant sect, and so was its academy. The academic curriculum could not be oblivious of practical considerations. A detailed study of the "Priestly Code" was designed to answer many and diverse current needs. For, more than any other part of the Scriptures, the Book of Leviticus afforded an occasion for discussing practically all the crucial laws and religious observances on which Karaites and Rabbanites crossed swords: the code of purity, dietary precautions, the calendar of fasts and feasts, laws of incests and the levirate marriage. Here was the ground on which Saadyah and other Rabbanite polemicists could be met in open battle. Here an authoritative platform could be formulated in reply to the attacks of the normative camp.

It is, indeed, not a matter of chance that Saadyah's Commentary on Leviticus was the Rabbinic text most frequently quoted and most strongly attacked by Karaite polemical literature of the period. Nor is it accidental that the most crucial passages against Byzantine Karaism, voiced by Tobias ben Eliezer, the leader of the Empire's Rabbanites,

²⁰⁷ The extremely broad design of the available scholarly works is, indeed, invoked by Jacob ben Reuben himself as the reason for his decision to compose *Sefer ha-'Osher*. Cf. the Introduction to the work, excerpted by Steinschneider in *Catalogue Leiden*, App. II, 384. See also the beginning of next note.

are all concentrated in the latter's *Leḳaḥ Ṭōb* on Leviticus. Characteristically, the only other extant Byzantine Karaite compilation of the eleventh century beside *Oṣar Neḥmad*—the oft-quoted *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous*—also made the "Priestly Code" one of the two main themes of its study.

INTERPRETING THE "PRIESTLY LORE"

Moving beyond these general observations, we can also draw a similar conclusion about the scope of *Oṣar Neḥmad* from the Byzantine texts themselves. What little extraneous testimony we have from Byzantium suggests, indeed, that Tobias' work, while consisting of several volumes presented over a period of many years, was limited only to Leviticus.²⁰⁸

Thus, we remember, some two generations after Tobias ben Moses, Yehūdah Hadassī referred to a legal query in calendar matters which Tobias and his Constantinopolitan colleagues had addressed in the eleventh century to the Karaite academy of Jerusalem. The query and the answer thereto, Hadassī added, were to be found in Tobias'

²⁰⁸ In this connection, the description of a MS copy of *Oṣar Neḥmad* which was in the hand of the already-mentioned bibliographer and jurist, Simḥah Lucki, should be considered. The latter reported *two* volumes of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad*. One dealt with dietary laws; the other discussed the laws of ritual purity. Both volumes treated apparently their respective subject-matter in so detailed a manner that Lucki did not consider them a biblical commentary at all. He thought they belonged to a full-fledged legal work, and presented accordingly *Oṣar Neḥmad* as part of Tobias' *Book of Precepts*. Cf. *Oraḥ Ṣaddīqīm*, 22b (top): אוצר נחמד חבורו של הרב רבנו טוביה בן משה ג"ע והוא נחלק לשנים ספרים. הספר האחד בביאור המאכלות הכשרות והאסורות, והספר השני בביאור דיני כל ענייני מיני הטמאות והטהרות ומזכיר דיעות כל החכמים הקדמונים פרט פרט על כל דבר ועניין והוא ספר נכבד ונחמד מאד. חלק גדול מספר המצות שלו. תנצ"ה

Now, there can be no doubting of the fact that Lucki was describing an actual manuscript which he had at his disposal. He was always careful to list separately the books which he knew by title only and to state distinctly that he had not seen them personally. Thus, for instance, having (incorrectly) inferred from other texts that also Joseph al-Baṣīr and Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah had written works entitled *Oṣar Neḥmad*, he listed them only at the end of that chapter (23a), and added emphatically that these other books [בשונותינו = בעינינו כעוה"ר] אינם נמצאים כחיים בידי עדתנו ולא דאינו אותם בעינינו כעוה"ר (cf. also in the broader version of Lucki's account, published by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 1413, top). Nor can there be any doubt as to the correctness of Lucki's description of the MS he saw. This description, however, is in obvious disagreement with the text of *Oṣar Neḥmad* as found in the Bodleian MS available to us.

In the light of our present reconstruction of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project, the difference in the contents of *Oṣar Neḥmad* reported by Lucki and the contents of *Oṣar Neḥmad* known from the Bodleian MS constitutes no difficulty. On the contrary: It strengthens throughout the thesis advanced here and supplements our information on the nature and structure of the work as a whole. Indeed, it enables us to reconstruct two additional note-books of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* series. For what Lucki had in

Oṣar han-Nehmad Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl.²⁰⁹ Hadassī's reference is an important piece of evidence in more than one respect. For, in the first place, the text invoked by Hadassī does not appear in the volume of *Oṣar Nehmad* which is at our disposal and which covers Lev. 1-10 alone; it obviously belonged to a much later part of the work—apparently that which commented on the festivals on the basis of Lev. 23. In that

hand was a direct continuation—Volumes II and III—of the text which found its way to the Bodleian Library.

Now, while Volume I (contained in the Bodl. MS) covered the first ten chapters of Leviticus (on sacrifices), Lucki's Volume II expounded the dietary laws on the basis of Lev. 11. The practical importance of that chapter, added to Tobias' general slant toward long-winded excursuses and repetitions, amply explains why a whole note-book was needed to do justice to a single scriptural chapter; dietary laws were undoubtedly the theme of a full-scale course in the Karaite academy of Jerusalem. Continuing the series, Lucki's Volume III covered the laws of purity, explaining the biblical legislation of Lev. 12-15. Whether the discussion of these laws was completed in that note-book cannot, of course, be said with certainty.

The whereabouts of Lucki's MSS (if they still exist) are unknown. But I shall not be surprised if it should prove one day that they were part of the same set—indeed, were written by the same hand—as the MS now in the Bodleian.

²⁰⁹ See above, 324 ff., and the quotations adduced there, notes 58 and 64, from Hadassī's *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 76a, Alphabet 187: יחד שאלהו מלפניהם משכילי ג"ע מ בני קשטנדינא: טוביא המשכיל רי"ת' וזולתו. . . אף בספריהם כך הודיעו וכתבו אלה השואלים באוצר הנחמד ויקרא הגדול. Hadassī lists also *Sefer Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl Oṣar Nehmad* (note the singular of the noun *sefer*!) in an earlier connection; cf. the quotation below, 439, note 215. The fact that the word order could, as in the latter instance, be reversed (*Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl* preceding *Oṣar Nehmad*) shows even more plainly that the general title, *Oṣar Nehmad*, referred to the Leviticus (*Wwayyikrā'*) series alone.

At any rate, I do not see how Hadassī's wording could be interpreted to mean that *Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl* was an autonomous work by an anonymous writer. Such, for instance, was the assertion of the aforequoted Simḥah Lucki, *Orah Ṣaddīqim*, 23b. The fact is that at no time did Hadassī list *Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl* as a separate entry, independent of *Oṣar Nehmad*.

It is to be added, however, that in some instances Hadassī mentioned *Oṣar Nehmad* without the appendage *Wwayyikrā' hag-Gadōl*. Cf., e.g., the quotation below, 439, note 215, from *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 42a, Alphabet 98. Somewhat confusing is the reference there, 92a, Alphabet 141, which speaks of "*Sefer Oṣar han-Nehmad* and (*sic*!) *Sefer Tōrath Kohanim*" (i.e., a Commentary on Leviticus) (מסורום תמצא בספר אוצר הנחמד ובספר: חורח כהנים המלמד' סהל ויפת ודוד הנשיא ג"ע וכן יפת ג"ע יחד). However, the whole sentence is obviously corrupt. Yefeth, for instance, is mentioned twice, and the phrase lacks either a predicate or a preposition. It is not impossible, then, that the "and" (which in the Hebrew script constitutes one stroke only) did not appear in the original text. If that was the case, the passage would strengthen even more the thesis expounded here.

On the confusion prevailing in Karaite texts and in modern studies with regard to the authorship of *Oṣar Nehmad*, cf. my essay in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 48 f. (and notes 17-19). Thus, we remember, Simḥah Lucki ascribed an *Oṣar Nehmad* to no less than three different scholars of the eleventh century. He admitted, however, that he had before his eyes the manuscript of Tobias' work alone. Cf. above, 433, note 208.

sefaray (meaning "my books"), which would give the phrase a more personal slant. The syntax admits, similarly, of two interpretations: either that only the particular volume at hand was "a commentary on the Priestly Teaching," while the remaining parts dealt with the rest of the Pentateuch; or else that *Ošar Neḥmad* as a whole was a commentary on Leviticus alone. In the light of the preceding discussion, however, Tobias' intention becomes clear beyond a shadow of doubt. He wished to state that he had "written this book which is *the first* [and not merely *one*] of the *volumes* [and not *books*, in general] of *Ošar Neḥmad*. It [i.e., the *latter*, *Ošar Neḥmad* as a whole] is a commentary on the Priestly Lore."²¹²

The above reconstruction explains also another problem which cannot fail to set the student wondering as he peruses the manuscript of *Ošar Neḥmad*. A half-page statement by a writer at the close of an exposition in which he covered only ten scriptural chapters is by all standards unconventional. To be sure, brief colophons by weary authors or scribes, addressing thanks to God on completion of a manuscript, are commonplace procedure in medieval Jewish literature. Even brief general statements appended at the conclusion of a single theme or chapter are not unusual. In fact, such a 7-line passage is to be found, *apart from our colophon*, on the same page of *Ošar Neḥmad* on which the

²¹² Our stress on the fact that *Ošar Neḥmad* was limited to Leviticus alone should not be taken to mean that Tobias did not expect to cover eventually other parts of the Pentateuch as well. Cf., e.g., his statement in the extant volume of his *Ošar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 137b, in which he expressed the hope that, "if the Almighty should will so," he would explain a certain problem at greater length in connection with the Book of Numbers: *וואני אם יחפץ שדי אבארהו שם בפרשת נשא כי אין הנה מקומי*. We do not know, however, whether he progressed that far in his exegetical composition.

For completeness' sake it should be recalled here that the older presentations of Karaite literature (e.g., Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, II, 201 f.; Seligsohn, in *Jewish Enc.*, XII, 167a) do list, in fact, a commentary on the whole Pentateuch, *Zōth hat-Tōrah*, which was allegedly composed by Tobias ben Moses. This assertion is based on the already-quoted communication of Firkowicz to Pinsker (cf. above, 324 f.) in which the former claimed to have seen also among the Karaite literary treasures that perished in the Crimean War *א' זאת התורה, מירוש על כל התורה בקיצור לר' טוביא* (see in *Liḳḳūtē*, App. XI, 94, note 1). Since, however, the other data included in that communication are suspect, extreme caution is imperative with regard to the present detail as well. Indeed, not only was the name of the author reported there in an unprecedented phrasing (cf., e.g., our discussion above, 418 f., note 172), but also the structure of the work itself, as described by Firkowicz, could hardly be expected from the pen of a Tobias. Frankly, after all we have learned of Tobias' literary habits, one would require a great deal of imagination to visualize Tobias writing a *short* (!!) commentary on all the Five Books of Moses.

crucial colophon was also inscribed; that briefer statement merely concludes the discussion of the main theme of Lev. 10.²¹³

Yet, the colophon discussed here has little in common with either of these two customary types of wind-up formulae. What we have here, beside honest personal sentiments, is a serious, full-scale, programmatic declaration: a statement of objectives, a description of the work's structure, an enumeration of its major sources, an explanation of its form—in short, a regular preface and a personal postscript in one. Seen in this light, the colophon is not only unconventional but clearly out of place. Why should Tobias have wished to make a statement of his literary creed and method when commenting on a Book which is only *third* in the order of Scriptures? Would not the *opening* or the *closing* volume of the Commentary—say, that on Genesis or on Deuteronomy, if the whole Pentateuch was covered—be a more appropriate platform for voicing pronouncements of this sort?

The answer to this question has already been foreshadowed in our past discussions. For, as concluded above, *Oṣar Neḥmad* was meant to serve as a commentary on Leviticus alone, not on the other Books of Moses, and the manuscript we have at hand was the first note-book in that commentary. Hence, that extant note-book *was*, indeed, the *opening* volume of the whole opus. Tobias has acted correctly, then, in providing

²¹³ Cf. Plate XXXV of the Volume of Facsimilies of Neubauer's *Bodleian Catalogue*, in which the last page of Tobias' *Oṣar Neḥmad* is reproduced. While the second half of the page contains the 16 lines of the herewith-analyzed large colophon, the first half consists of 14 lines. Closing in lines 6–8 the discussion of his specific subject-matter, by saying that [ו]הדבר הוא אש' נגלה לנו מדרך הלשון] והדקדוק כאש' ביארנו והוא הס' [הנב] והאלהים ידריכנו בארחותיו ודרכי מצותיו: (lines 8–14) Tobias adds the following (lines 8–14): *ואל ישלנו בתורתו אבל יאיר עינינו במצותיו ככת' גל עיני ואביטה. ואמ' המשורר עוד הרני יי חקך. הדריכני בנתיבי מצותיך. פניך האר בעבדך. יבוא משיח צדקנו ויגאלנו. ומבור הגלות ידלנו. ומסיס אוננו [צ"ל: יוננו] יעלנו. ויסיר הפוגה והספיקה והמחלוקת מבינינו. ויקיים כת' הנאמ' והרשום בנבואה הנאמנה. ובני ציון גילו ושמחו. ויקיים כת' הנאמ' סיום כל חזון ונבואה הגה אנכי שלח לכם רבי וא' [מר] והשיב לב אב[ות] רבי.*

Even a superficial comparison of this passage with the large colophon following it shows beyond a shadow of doubt that the two texts were not written at the same time. While the first text is permeated throughout with the spirit of messianic expectation, as befits a "Mourner of Zion," the other text reflects the calm and sober sense of responsibility of a diasporic leader. This difference is also well mirrored in the biblical quotations invoked in each case. The only element uniting both passages is Karaism's well-known praise of intellectualism.

Evidently, the first brief colophon was composed by Tobias in Jerusalem on completion of his first note-book. At that time Tobias was still a student in the Jerusalem academy and a member in the *Abelē Şiyyōn* Order. The other colophon, however, was written at a later period. Placing the note-book from his student days at the disposal of his flock in Byzantium, the mature leader added a longer statement. That statement quite naturally reflected Tobias' later station and responsibility.

the very first note-book which he placed at the disposal of the public with a full-length explanatory colophon. In this manner he introduced not only his comments on the first ten chapters of Leviticus, but the whole series of note-books which he was to release successively through the years to come. This series formed in its sum-total *The Delightful Treasure* (*Oṣar han-Nehmad*), "and it [was] a commentary on the Priestly Lore."²¹⁴

THE PUBLICATION PLAN

Though, as we have seen, *Oṣar Nehmad* was limited to the Book of Leviticus alone, it nevertheless was a part of a still broader design. It is here that we reach the fourth and last point in the colophon which may help us reconstruct the Byzantine Karaite compilation activity: the titles of literary productions as guide to the *general publication plan of the Project*. A review of the pertinent information supplied by Tobias himself, along with the data adduced two generations later by Hadassī (but reflecting the eleventh-century situation), is not without interest. Such review permits also a fleeting glimpse into the *editorial work* performed by Tobias.

The nature and objective of the Compilation Project, the character of the materials utilized in it, and the fact that it was a communal undertaking could not fail to enshroud the names of several authors and the titles of their works with a cloak of anonymity. Hadassī's method of reporting on the works of his Byzantine predecessors may well serve as an illustration. On the one hand, Hadassī lists a number of early Byzantine Karaite creations by their specific titles.²¹⁵ However, more often than

²¹⁴ To be sure, Tobias invokes in the extant volume of *Oṣar Nehmad* his earlier interpretation of Sabbath laws. Cf. Bodl. MS No. 290, 110b: וכבר ביארנו בפת[רון] ענין השבת. Since the Sabbath laws have been decreed in the Second Book of Moses, Tobias' statement might perhaps be taken to mean that he himself had previously composed a commentary on Exodus as well. This, however, would be a mistaken notion. Tobias is known for this loose manner of phrasing references to books which he merely translated (cf. on this Frankl, *Beiträge*, 7, and below, 444, note 226). Thus, he may be referring here to *Sefer ham-Mo'adim* (Tract on the Festivals) or to some other *maqāla* from *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* of his teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr (see below, 445 f., note 227), or perhaps to a chapter in a legalistic work of his own which was then in the making. As we know, Tobias' *Book of Precepts* was still studied in Constantinople in the late fifteenth century and even sought after by the communities of Lithuania. Cf. my comments in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 48, note 15, and above, 52, end of note 66.

²¹⁵ Speaking of the sources underlying his own encyclopedia, Hadassī declares (*Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 21c, Alphabet 33): על כן הרתחתי וחקקתי מעט מהרבה בדעתך: הם כתובי בספר (!) ספר חכמי הדעת בעיניך. ובספר מאירה עינים: ובספר מחכימת פתי: ובספר גבילי של נעימות אלמוחטוי

not, he speaks of Byzantine Karaite authors in a very general and indefinite manner, wrapping his statements in stylistic mannerisms and vague scriptural allusions. Thus he occasionally borrows from Ecclesiastes the term *ba'alē asuppoth*, lending it the literal meaning of "Compilers" or "Authors of Collections."²¹⁶

Now, the use of a verse like Eccl. 12:11, which belongs to the standard Karaite thesaurus of biblical quotations, should always be viewed with caution. Scriptural terms, which the sect liked to invoke as prophetic confirmation of its mission and described through them its leaders and doctrines, do not necessarily reflect facts: they frequently delineate a situation as the sect wished it to be, rather than as it really was. But there can be no doubt that many standardized terms and titles, stemming originally from the Scriptures, settled in the everyday Karaite jargon and came to denote actual things or persons. Hence, the possibility should not be excluded that Hadassī may indeed have been stating a fact. The collaborators and successors of Tobias in the Project may in actual practice have been known to the community as *ba'alē asuppoth*, or Compilers. Their compilations—perhaps referred to in a matter-of-fact manner as *Asuppoth*, i.e., *Collections*, pure and simple—were apparently popular anthologies, with little, if any, original contribution by the editing hand. No wonder they remained anonymous, as did also their compilers.

Not so the more serious and more scholarly and original compilations. Limited undoubtedly to a narrower circle of readers from among the Constantinopolitan intelligentsia, these books were known by title and

משכילי נ"ע שהשכילו יחוד אליהן וספר מתוק לגפש וספר מדפא לעצם וספר הדתות: וספר ויקרא הגדול אוצר נחמד ודומיהם ספרי משכילי גלותך: ... טוב מספרם וחכמתם מי יוכל לספר במלוננו And again, 42a, Alphabet 98 (actually Alphabet 100, since two earlier Alphabets were deleted from the printed edition; see above, 28, note 5): חפץ כל אלה שהוכרתי הנם כתובים בספרי מלמדי: זכרונם בספר נעימות משכילי: מבוארים בשאלותם ותשובותם לעיני מביני: הלא הם יורוך ויגידו אליך: זכרונם בספר נעימות אלמוחטוי ובספר מאירת עינים. ובספר מחכימת פתי: ובספר הדתות: ובספר אוצר הנחמד לפניך: ובספר חכמת גבולים וספר מתוק לגפש: וספר מדפא לעצם: וכלל ספרי משכילי תנוח נפשם בגופם Further in the book, 98c-d, Alphabet 258, Hadassī gives some more titles of (Byzantine) Hebrew translations. Speaking apparently of Joseph al-Basīr, he mentions his זכרון הדתות הנודע ספר נעימות, his המצות ספר (see below, 445 f., note 227), his שקראו קפת כתב (!) אלחמיין (a book of the divine laws), and a ספר הניצנים (see below, 441, note 221), and a ספר הניצנים.

For some of the books enumerated by Hadassī, cf. my notes in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955–56), 50–52. It goes without saying that the exact identity of all these books is of no direct concern to us in this connection.

²¹⁶ So, for instance, in Alphabet 226, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 87a: ומקצת דבריהם ספרתי בעיניך: אבל הדרוש ומחפש בכסף דבר ה'. כזאת וכזאת ימצא הבל בדקדוק ספריהם זה רמזי וקבצי לכל חרדי ה'. אצל הדרוש ומחפש בכסף דבר ה'. כזאת וכזאת ימצא הבל בדקדוק ספריהם. ראיית חזקת במסמרות בטועים בעלי אסופות שנתנו מרועה א' [חד] ודוא ה' אליהן.

For the last part of the statement cf. above, 242, note 82.

author and were integrated into a broader series of publications. This fact does not change their eclectic nature, nor did it diminish in the eleventh century the authors' own awareness of the compilatory character of the compositions. Eclecticism, we must bear in mind, was looked upon in those days as a perfectly commendable, even creative, and by all means useful art of scholarly writing. Karaite scholars openly prided themselves on having "enriched" their compositions with the sayings of the classic masters.²¹⁷ Consistent with this concept, Jacob ben Reuben labeled his oft-quoted compilation *The Book of Riches* (*Sefer ha-'Osher*).²¹⁸

It was this conscious eclecticism that made Tobias ben Moses entitle his Leviticus-series *The Delightful Treasure* (*Ošar Neḥmad*). By introducing his work as a thesaurus, Tobias intended more than to claim distinction for his Palestinian note-books or to recall the ancient saying that "There is a *delightful treasure* and oil in the dwelling of the wise" (Prov. 21:20). The title reflected his larger vision of the Compilation Project as the Great Encyclopedia, the veritable Treasury of Karaite Lore. For it was precisely the eclecticism of the age that from the outset made for sweeping plans and for a truly encyclopedic design of the eleventh-century Compilation Project; such design, incidentally, was also well in line with the dominant trend in contemporaneous Byzantine literature at large.

ENCYCLOPEDIC OBJECTIVES

This encyclopedic objective of Tobias' work is clearly revealed in the other title which he saw fit to mention in his colophon to *Ošar Neḥmad*. Placing at the disposal of the public his voluminous opus on Leviticus, Tobias presented it as a part of a still richer and more-encompassing series of collections, bearing the picturesque superscription *The Peddlers' Bag* (*Ḳuppah ha-Rōkhelim*). This expression, even more perhaps than *The Delightful Treasure*, was an ancient Jewish way of describing encyclopedic scope of learning.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ See, e.g., Hadassī, *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 98d, end of Alphabet 258: חוקף בייאור מלמדינו: ג"ע וחברנו הנה מעט מהרבה כי מספריה' בחעשרנו, see Pinsker, *Likḳūtē*, App., Note XIV, 199.

²¹⁸ Cf. in the Introduction to the book, partly reproduced by Steinschneider, *Catalogue Leiden*, App. II, 384: וקראו [= המחבר] ספר העושר לפי ש[ה]קרא בו מחעשר ממנו.

²¹⁹ See the passage in Bab. Tal. *Giffin*, 67a, "in praise of scholars." It is worth noting that, unlike *The Treasure*, which evokes a definite *biblical* association, *The Peddlers' Bag* is a purely Rabbinical *talmudic* metaphor. The use of such a phrase by the Byzantine Karaites for a great publication project of sectarian literature is not accidental. It bears additional proof of the new Karaite attitude toward the Talmud

Now, Tobias' exact role in the publication of that broader series was not disclosed. From the fact that he assumed full responsibility for any possible misstatement of "the words of the Teachers who had been quoted herewith in these books which bear the title *The Peddlers' Bag*,"²²⁰ one can gather that Tobias was personally involved in the preparation of these texts. But, whether this involvement entailed actual authorship of some volumes, apart from *Oṣar Neḥmad*, or merely supervision and editorial guidance of the work of other scholars, is a matter for speculation.²²¹ Similarly, we are in the dark about the nature and scope of that series. Since the other components in the series—Tobias speaks of "these books" (in the plural!)—have not been recovered, the extant manuscript of *Oṣar Neḥmad* alone can help us form an idea of the character of *The Peddlers' Bag*.

The compilations assembled under that overall title seem to have constituted a series of full-scale, half-independent works. These were based, of course, on Palestinian notes and on the sayings of the Teachers, yet they were integrated by the Byzantine author into a coherent composition. Most important, unlike the popular *Asuppoth*, the *Ḳuppah ha-Rōkḥelim* series was apparently designed for the student and the more advanced general public. Each work seems to have covered a limited number of legal themes or one single Book of the Scriptures. The emphasis was on detailed exposition. It may be surmised that the sum total of such monographic studies was to encompass the totality of Karaite scholastic attainment.

Since some of the class-notes underlying the said works retained the form of Questions-and-Answers (*Masā'il wa-Jawā'ib*), reminiscent of the original discussions in the Jerusalem academy, the Byzantine compilers would apply the same procedure also to the independent material they themselves had contributed. Thus, for instance, Tobias, going over

which we ascribed earlier, 244 f., to the initiative of Tobias ben Moses (see likewise above, 400, note 126). It supports also, from a different angle, the thesis expounded in the present chapter that, in launching their great Compilation and Translation Project, the Karaites of the Empire addressed themselves in large measure to their *Rabbanite* neighbors.

ואם תמצאו שבוש בדברי המלמדים הנזכרים באלה הספרים הנקראים קפת הרוכלים. דעו אחי כי
השבוש אינו מהם כי אם ממני.

²²¹ True, Hadassī seems to ascribe a book (in the singular!), entitled *Ḳuppah ha-Rōkḥelim*, to Tobias' teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr (cf. above, 439, note 215). Since, however, he enumerates all known works of al-Baṣīr separately (see in the same note), his later attribution of *The Peddlers' Bag*, too, to that scholar is not without difficulty. Even if we accept Hadassī's assertion, we still shall have to assume that it was Tobias who translated al-Baṣīr's book from the Arabic into Hebrew, just as was the case with the other compositions of the Palestinian master.

the old notes and adding his own comments on the subject, had found it advisable to "further formulate here a series of Questions-and-Answers to the extent of my power and ability."²²² Such arrangement was not only in line with the prevalent literary *genre*, but also must have proved extremely useful in the practical sense: it gave the intelligent Karaite in the Empire ready-made material for religious debates with his Rabbanite neighbor next door and didactic pointers for further study on his own.²²³ This last consideration was especially important after 1071, when study trips of Byzantine students to Palestine became less and less feasible under the prevailing international conditions.²²⁴

Not until a number of generations had passed did the Byzantine plan of a Hebrew Karaite Encyclopedia materialize—and then in a form far different from that which its eleventh-century pioneers had visualized. It was in the early twelfth century, apparently, that Jacob ben Reuben produced the rather clumsy, yet unquestionably comprehensive, synopsis of Karaism's entire biblical exegesis, the already-quoted *Sefer ha-'Osher*, or *Book of Riches*. Some time in the second half of that century, the Constantinopolitan Yehūdah Hadassī completed his unique encyclopedia of Karaite wisdom. Aware of the continuity between it and the encyclopedic attempts of his predecessors, he labeled his own work *The Cluster of Henna (Eshkol hak-Kofer)*, paraphrasing the term in Cant. 1:14 which in the Hebrew literature of all times was the accepted synonym for encyclopedic erudition. In spite of its irritating style and unwieldy structure, Hadassī's *Eshkol* was quite correctly evaluated by modern historiography as "the vast sea into which all the rivulets of Karaite lore emptied themselves."²²⁵

But, however significant, these practical accomplishments of the twelfth century were but the consummation of a long, preparatory process which began with Tobias; the initial plan for in-gathering the classical Karaite production and for presenting it in the Hebrew tongue belonged to the eleventh century, i.e., to the formative years of Karaism on Byzantine soil. Indeed, to judge by form and content of the extant fragment of *Oṣar Neḥmad*, the early plan was possibly conceived

²²² ועשיתי בו שאלות כדי כתי ויכלתי.

²²³ Cf., e.g., Tobias' statement in *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Bodl. MS No. 290, 50b: ויש זיט—הנה לבעלי בינה שאלות הרבה מאד והם עיקר ובנה על זה הדרך.

²²⁴ See above, 189.

²²⁵ Cf. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, II, 352; Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadia*, 68.

on a much broader scale, and its first productions were drawn up along much more sweeping and ambitious lines.

THE LITERARY PROJECT: TRANSLATIONS

So much for the first direction of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project, the *Compilation*. Rising from modest beginnings and welded together, at first, from jumbles of Palestinian class-notes, the compilation activity grew steadily in stature and in number of productions, developing encyclopedic plans and attaining encyclopedic dimensions. The second direction of the Project was *Translation*, pure and simple. Through the systematic translation activity of the eleventh-century Karaite school in the Empire, basic Arabic works of Palestinian masters were made available in Hebrew to the Byzantine reader.

Of course, the proposed division into *Compilation* and *Translation* cannot be applied at all times and with equal rigidity to all literary creations produced under the auspices of the Project. Not always can a tangible demarcation line between the two fields of activity be drawn with certainty. For, as already described at length in the preceding sections of this chapter, the popular Byzantine compilations, too, could with much justification be classified as outright translations. Indeed, even the serious, half-independent compositions of the *Oṣar Nehmad* type required by their very nature a great deal of translating, whatever the translation method. Nor was the division chronological. It would be erroneous to conceive *Compilation* and *Translation* as two separate stages of the Byzantine Project, succeeding one another. The two activities were at all times pursued simultaneously. They both were initiated and directed by the same leader, Tobias ben Moses; they both came as answers to the same communal needs and external challenges, and both had the same *far-reaching objectives* in view.

Nevertheless, a general division of the Project along these two major lines of Hebrew creativity in Byzantium—*Compilation* and *Translation*—is unquestionably justified. It would have been warranted even if it were to be limited to difference of form and scope only. This difference stands out unmistakably in what little Byzantine Karaite material is extant today; it surely could not have been less pronounced back in the eleventh century, when all the compositions were easily accessible or still in the making. The Compilers juggled, as a rule, with *excerpts*, which they either translated expressly, as the need for them arose, or found already translated in their Palestinian note-books. These excerpts

they wove, in an abridged, enlarged, or otherwise patched-up Hebrew formulation, into their collections, along with editorial comments and notes. Not so the Translators. The latter offered the Arabic classics *in their entirety*, translating them into Hebrew with as much precision as the Hebrew vocabulary of that time would permit, and providing them with Greek glosses according to need.²²⁶

True, the above distinction is confined to externals only. Much of it could undoubtedly be ascribed to differing tempers, interests and qualifications of the individual scholars collaborating on the Project. Nevertheless, it surely is revealing. Since both sections of the Project were communal undertakings and were designed to serve an overall strategy of the sect in the Empire, the structural difference between their respective end-products cannot be devoid of significance. It may perhaps reflect the problem of *method* and of *immediate objectives* which confronted the leaders of the Project in the mid-eleventh century. For, obviously, the immediate objectives and the methods of attaining them were conditioned by the practical possibilities and limitations inherent in the circumstances under which the Project was born in Byzantium.

Thus, while Compilation could fall back on ready material accumulated in the Palestinian note-books of Byzantine students, Translation had to forge its own tools and start from scratch. The translation techniques to be observed in the later Rabbanite projects of the Tibbonid school were still a matter of the future. Such techniques as were necessary had to be improvised in Byzantium whenever the need for them arose. New terms had to be coined and antiquated idioms had to be imbued with novel shades of meaning even while the translation was in the making. Moreover, manuscripts were scarce, and a well-organized job of copying the Arabic Karaite classics in order to prepare them for *full* and exact translation—not to speak of the translation itself—required time and skilled personnel.

PHILOSOPHIC AND LEGALISTIC LITERATURE

These difficulties must have affected the rate of progress of Translation in the early stages of the Project. The regular, communally planned activity of translating into Hebrew entire works of Arabic-writing

²²⁶ It is to be added, however, that in his earliest translations of al-Baṣīr's works (see below, 445) Tobias felt rather free to reorganize the material and inserted sometimes references to his own works. Cf. Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 7, and the references and quotations in *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 49 f., notes 19-20.

Karaite authorities must have proceeded, at first, at a considerably slower pace than Compilation.

And yet, slow as this activity had to be, caution was hardly its watchword. If Tobias' own translations might serve as a guide in the matter, the contrary rather is apparent. From the outset, as one must conclude on the basis of the extant material, the Translators reached out for an impressive variety of subject-matter, encompassing law, biblical exegesis and philosophy. No wonder they could claim only limited success, especially insofar as philosophy was concerned. The initial, so-to-speak "experimental," translations by Tobias of philosophical treatises—such as his Hebrew versions of the works of his teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr—demonstrate this limitation beyond any doubt. One cannot help thinking that even Tobias' contemporaries must have realized that the task was too ambitious for a vehicle as inadequate as was the Hebrew of the mid-eleventh century.

More feasible, apparently, was the translation of legal books. These consisted of full-scale *Books of Precepts* (*Sifrē Mišwoth*)—e.g., the oft-quoted code of Levi ben Yefeth—or of legal monographs on selected themes. The latter, too, if covering in their sum total the whole range of Jewish law, could eventually be referred to as a *Book of Precepts*. Such was, for instance, the case with al-Baṣīr's series of monographs forming his *Book of Investigation of Divine Ordinances* (*Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī-l-Farā'id*).²²⁷ It is not surprising that from this class of literature came the

²²⁷ As far as can be judged from the description of the extant portions of the work, *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* was perhaps never one unit in the ordinary sense. The appellation "Book of Precepts" lent to it (or, rather, to the Hebrew translation thereof) was obviously influenced by the familiar pattern of *Sifrē Mišwoth* which Karaite Teachers were wont to produce. Cf. *Eshkol hak-Kofer*, 98c, Alphabet 258 (above, 439, note 215); Frankl, "Zur karäischen Bibliographie," *MGWJ*, XXI (1872), 278; Schreiner, *Der Kalām in der jüdischen Literatur*, 33 (notes). In reality, however, such appellation was to a large degree a misnomer. Somewhat in line with the literary *genre* prevailing in the Rabbanite camp of the tenth and the eleventh centuries, al-Baṣīr dealt with separate items of Karaite legislation in a monographic form. Sometimes, he, too, molded his material into a question-and-answer form, the way it was originally discussed at the sectarian academy in Jerusalem. Cf., e.g., the Tract on the 'Omer, described by Margoliouth, *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 185, §596 (MS Or. 2570), which, in the opinion of Poznański "parait également appartenir au כתוב אלאסתבאר." See the latter's review of Margoliouth's *Catalogue*, Vol. II, in *REJ*, LI (1906), 158.

Thus, individual monographs would pass as quasi-independent works. This explains why we have separate manuscripts for different portions of the *Istibṣār*, such as the *Kalām fī-l-Yerushshoth* (Margoliouth's *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 180 f., §591, MS Or. 2576, fols. 1–15; compare Poznański's review, *op. cit.*, 157 f.), or the Tract on the 'Omer just mentioned, etc. Indeed, a *maḳāla* on the festivals was even independently translated into Hebrew as *Sefer han-Mo'adim* (see below, 446). At the same time,

earliest Karaite legal texts to be translated from the Arabic into Hebrew. Nor shall we wonder, in the light of our previous analysis of legal trends in Byzantine Karaism, why the early eleventh-century Palestinian works in the field were particularly popular. These liberal works proved a most helpful companion in the crucial process of adjustment which confronted young Karaism in its new Byzantine home.

Thus, Tobias personally translated al-Baṣīr's monographic *Discourse on the Festivals* (*Sefer ham-Mo'adim*).²²⁸ Likewise, the School of Tobias rendered into Hebrew at a very early stage the full version of Levi ben Yefeth's *Book of Precepts*: Tobias himself referred to it already in the first volume of his *Oṣar Neḥmad*.²²⁹ Some time later, also the works of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah, Jerusalem's last (and somewhat less radical) Karaite authority, were included in the Translation Project.²³⁰ Especially his *Book of Incests* (*Kitāb al-'Arayoth*), translated into Hebrew by Jacob ben Simon as *Sefer hay-Yashar*, carried great weight in the legal decisions of Byzantine Karaites.²³¹

BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES

However, of all the available types of Karaite literature, biblical exegesis enjoyed undoubtedly the greatest popularity. This was, first of all, due

the different monographs were from the very outset referred to not only by their individual titles but also as components of the *Istibṣār*. Cf., e.g., the colophon to the aforementioned *Kalām fi'l-Yerushshoth*, reproduced in Margoliouth's *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 181a, or the reference to *Maḳālat al-Ma'akhaloth* in the Tract on the 'Omer, *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 185b. This simultaneous procedure of naming the separate chapters of the *Istibṣār* both collectively and specifically indicates that al-Baṣīr intended to (and apparently did) cover the whole range of Jewish law.

The above presentation of the gradual shaping of the *Istibṣār* into a full-fledged Book of Precepts explains also the difference in time between the manuscripts of its individual components. Almost two decades have elapsed between the monographic treatment of the law of inheritance (*Kalām fi'l-Yerushshoth*, copied or composed in 1019; cf. the colophon in *Catalogue Brit. Museum*, II, 181a) and another portion of the book, copied or composed in 1036–37 (cf. the text and the references in my "Ibn al-Hiti and the Chronology of Joseph al-Baṣīr," *JJS*, VIII, Nos. 1–2 [1957], 73, note 16, and 74). On the other hand, it goes without saying that the Hebrew compendia (such as the one excerpted from a St. Petersburg MS by Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen*, III, 44 f., notes 120–21, or the one which was in the hand of Hadassī) summarized the book *in toto*, earning for it in this manner the general label of *Sefer Miṣwoth*.

²²⁸ See on it Steinschneider, *Hebr. Übersetzungen*, II, 944; Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 7; Poznański, *Oṣar Yisrael*, V, 13a.

²²⁹ Cf. above, 227, note 44. Tobias had probably in mind the Arabic original of Levi's book.

²³⁰ On Yeshū'ah's position in between the more radical stand of his teacher, Joseph al-Baṣīr, and the old school, see above, 83, and note 70.

²³¹ Cf. above, 188 f., and note 74.

Tobias' own role in the translation of Yeshū'ah's writings has hitherto been greatly

to public reading of biblical material in the synagogue by both factions of Jewry (which gave rise to ceaseless debates over the correct interpretation of the weekly scriptural portion).²³² It further was enhanced by the general accessibility of Scriptures to broader circles of readers. Moreover, preoccupation with the Bible was already viewed in the eleventh century as the accepted stamp of Karaite allegiance and called for a proper, Karaite-oriented understanding of the biblical text. Hence, translations of exegetical compositions from the Arabic surpassed in number and demand all other Hebrew Karaite writings in Byzantium. Especially the

exaggerated. It probably did not go beyond the usual planning, moral encouragement and general scholarly guidance that were expected of a leader. At any rate, Tobias did not participate personally in the translation. The later Byzantino-Turkish traditions, invoked by modern scholars, to the effect that Tobias himself translated the works of Yeshū'ah and disseminated them in Byzantium, are plainly apocryphal. Cf. my critical analysis of the problem in "Elijah Bashyachi: An Inquiry Into His Traditions Concerning the Beginnings of Karaism in Byzantium" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955-56), 44-65, 183-201, and English summary. See also above, 324, note 57.

²³² The late fifteenth-century Kaleb Afendopolo asserted that in the period of the sect's decline (some time in the thirteenth century), the Karaites made a decisive change in the procedure governing the reading of the scriptural portion in Synagogue. Up to that time, the weekly Karaite lesson coincided with that of the Rabbanites. This gave rise to constant bickerings and quarrels between the two sections of Byzantine Jewry over the correct interpretation of the recited scriptural text. Anxious to put a stop to these arguments, Karaite leadership moved the beginning of the annual reading-cycle from Tishrī to Nīsan. Only in the fifteenth century, following Karaite-Rabbanite rapprochement, was the old system restored. Cf. the excerpt from Kaleb's *Pathshegen Kethab had-Dath*, reproduced by A. Danon, "Documents Relating to the History of the Karaites in European Turkey," *JQR* (N.S.), XVII (1926-27), 168 f. also reprinted partly in Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, 296 f., note 7).

Whether or not Kaleb's explanation is historically correct, there can be no doubt about the truth of the sect's recollections concerning the weekly disputations between Karaites and Rabbanites on the subject of biblical exegesis: והנה היו תלמידי חכמים מעינים במפרשי התורה בפרשת השבוע והיו הקראים מתווכחים עם אחינו הרבנים על דברי תורה וברשאים ונותנים בתלמודה עד שקרה מזה (ה) מחלוקת וקטטה גדולה ביניהם. Characteristically, Kaleb stresses the role of *mepharshē hat-tōrah*, i.e., the available Byzantine Hebrew commentaries, as primarily responsible for the weekly manifestations of Karaite self-assertion.

In addition to the weekly *pentateuchal* lesson, also the corresponding *prophetic* chapters read in the Synagogue gave rise to differences in interpretation between Rabbanites and Karaites. In this connection, the marked parallelism between the Order of Prophetic Readings (*haftaroth*) in both sections of Byzantine Jewry should especially be stressed. As correctly observed by L. Finkelstein, the ritual customary among the Byzantine Rabbanites "is remarkable not only for its difference from that usual among the [non-Byzantine] Rabbanites, but even more for its similarity to that of the Karaites." Cf. Finkelstein's "The Prophetic Readings According to the Palestinian, Byzantine, and Karaite Rites," *HUCA*, XVII (1942-43), 423. The common text, going back to "common dependence on the Palestinian ritual" (Finkelstein, 424, 426), served as a standing invitation to exegetical polemics between the two factions, and made the biblical commentaries underlying such polemics very popular indeed.

biblical commentaries of Yefeth ben 'Ali, the late tenth-century Palestinian Teacher, won the acclaim of Byzantine readers and were translated in their entirety.

This, however, seems to have been a later development. Tobias, we remember, still considered the other Palestinian exegete of the tenth century, David ben Bo'az, as equal in stature and authority to Yefeth ben 'Ali; he had built his *Oṣar Neḥmad* on excerpts from the commentaries of both exegetes.²³³ Yet, for various reasons, David's Arabic work had not been translated in full. It ceased then to exert influence on the later, non-Arabic-speaking generations and, save for the Hebrew excerpts in *Oṣar Neḥmad*, it is now totally lost. On the other hand, the existence of Yefeth's commentaries in a full Hebrew version made Yefeth the uncontested Karaite interpreter of the Scriptures. Consequently, the Byzantine Karaite compilation, *Sefer ha-'Osher*, produced a generation or two after Tobias, is almost fully based on Yefeth's exegesis.

This brings us to the later stage of the Byzantine Literary Project. Unfolding through the years, Translation gradually accumulated experience and perfected its tools and techniques. In time, it overtook Compilation and became the spearhead of the Project as a whole. Translators paved the way for Compilers, providing them with new, Byzantine-translated material for a further production of Hebrew collections and anthologies. This development was also a natural corollary of the general growth of Karaism in the Empire. The more "byzantinized" was the sect since the end of the eleventh century, the more the use of Hebrew became a matter of *necessity* and not (as in the mid-eleventh-century) predominantly of *ideology*.

Thus, Jacob ben Reuben did not have to resort anymore in the early twelfth century to sporadic Hebrew excerpts, accidentally translated by Byzantine students in Palestine. He had at his disposal a vast array of full-scale translations produced in Byzantium by Tobias' disciples and successors. Unlike Tobias himself, who had to translate sections of Yefeth's Commentary on Leviticus *while* compiling his *Oṣar Neḥmad*, Jacob could utilize in his encyclopedic presentation of Karaite exegesis

²³³ Also the *Exodus-Leviticus Anonymous*, which, as we remember, was composed some time after Tobias (in 1088; cf. above, 246, and note 94), frequently cites the sayings of David ben Bo'az along with those of other Palestinian exegetes. Cf. the hitherto unpublished Leiden MS Warner No. 3, 54b: *זה פתרון מן הנשיא יחייהו אל שדי* while on 55b: *המלמד יחייהו יי*. Cf. further, e.g., 218a: *ואמר מן פתרון*; or, 264b: *ואדונינו הנשיא פתח בן*; or, earlier in the book, 21b: *מן פתרון* — — *הנשיא כי זה שאמר* — — *ואדונינו הנשיא דוד בן בעז ניג* [=נחור נפש] etc., etc. No prevalence of (or preference for) the commentaries of Yefeth, such as manifested later in *Sefer ha-'Osher*, is yet in sight.

ready-made Hebrew versions of entire books, ranging over the whole biblical commentary of Yefeth ben 'Ali.

THE LITERARY PROJECT—AN EVALUATION

The above reconstruction of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project constitutes quite naturally the climax of the broader story unfolded all through the preceding chapters of this volume: the story of Karaism's formative years on Byzantine soil. For, transcending whatever literary value it possessed, such a linguistically independent literary undertaking was the culmination of the century-long evolution of the sect in its new environment.

Of course, the communal character, objective, and organization of the Project were primarily the work of a young, Byzantine-born and Byzantine-oriented *leadership*. Credit for the unprecedented compilation and translation enterprise is due, first of all, to the eleventh-century Constantinopolitan Tobias ben Moses. It was he, we recall, who, after spending several years of his youth in Palestine under the tutelage of Joseph al-Bašir, initiated and actively participated in the Project. No wonder later generations remembered Tobias mainly in connection with this activity. They honored him as *ha-'Obed*, "the Servant [of God]," thus referring vaguely to the earlier part of his life and to his membership in the Order of *Abelē Šiyyōn* at Jerusalem.²³⁴ But they similarly extolled the quality of leadership which he displayed later, in Byzantium, when he conducted the Literary Project. *Hab-Baḳī* they called him,²³⁵ i.e., "the Proficient [in Karaite Law and Literature]," or *ham-Maskil*,²³⁶ "the Erudite," or, finally, *ham-Ma'tiḳ*.²³⁷ This latter title (stemming from the same root as *ha'ataḳah*) retained for a long time its original connotation of "Transmitter [of Karaite Lore]," but gradually began to absorb also the meaning of "Translator."²³⁸

²³⁴ Cf. Aaron ben Elijah's *Gan 'Eden*, 33d, 44c, 145b, 168c; Elijah Bashyachi's *Addereth Eliyyahū*, Section *Shabū'oth*, Ch. III, 68a; Mordecai ben Nisan's *Dod Mordecai*, 7b. See also Neubauer's *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 147, No. 766.

For the connotation of the title see above, 428, note 203.

²³⁵ Cf., e.g., *Ḥillūḳ haḳ-Ḳara'im we ha-Rabbanim*, in Pinsker, *Likḳūṭē*, App. XII, 106.

²³⁶ So, for instance, Hadassī, *Eshkol haḳ-Kofer*, 106c, end of Alphabet 281.

²³⁷ Cf., e.g., Aaron ben Joseph's *Mibḥar* on Exodus, 71a (bottom); on Leviticus, 41b (bottom); Aaron ben Elijah's *Gan 'Eden*, 114a (top); Elijah Bashyachi's *Iggereth Gid han-Nasheh*, preceding the Gozlow edition of *Addereth Eliyyahū* (unpaginated; our passage is in the fourth column of the first folio).

²³⁸ On the double meaning of the verb פתח see Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III, 65-67.

By a happy coincidence, both connotations reflect correctly Tobias' indelible contribution to the subsequent history of Karaism. For his literary initiative, based to such a great extent on *translation*, was, in the full sense of the word, an epoch-making work of *transmission*—transmission, that is, of the sect's tradition which Tobias and his colleagues had studied and observed in Palestine; transmission to Byzantium of the cumulative literary and scholarly attainment of four generations of Jerusalem masters; transmission of the new spirit of the Late Golden Age of Palestinian Karaism, showing the way toward an independent reinterpretation of the ancient lore and toward its further development on the banks of the Bosphorus.

But, however important in the eyes of the *leaders*, whether as weapon against Rabbanite and Mishawite adversaries of Karaism on the Byzantine scene or as a leavening agent in the educational process within the sect itself, Tobias' undertaking would hardly have reached fulfillment had it not been eagerly and wholeheartedly espoused by the rank and file of the Byzantine Karaites. Hence, the success of the Hebrew compilation and translation activity is to be ascribed in no lesser degree to the *local Karaite community as a whole*. This activity heralded Byzantine Karaism's coming of age, in terms of both its standing within Byzantine Jewry in general and its position in relation to the other Karaite branches the world over. It reflected the spiritual ripeness and communal maturity of these eleventh-century Byzantine heirs to the erstwhile Karaite immigrants from the Islamic East. Apparently, after several decades of inarticulate growth and expansion, the Karaites of Byzantium had reached that stage of economic stability and social consolidation which, with the prompting of external factors, called for *self-expression* in the field of religious thought, law and literature.

This self-expression, as we have seen, was not necessarily original in substance and form, at first. But it was their own, i.e., spelt in terms they knew or coined to suit their specific conditions, and expressed in a language of their own choosing. Indeed, even such seemingly technical and unimaginative activity as translation is an expression of self-assertion. The greatest movements of religious self-assertion—this we know from history—began with translations. Thus, the new literature in Hebrew reflected the emancipation of Byzantine Karaism from the Arabic garb which clung to the Karaite movement for almost two centuries; the third and fourth generations of native Byzantine Karaites considered such garb incompatible with the Byzantine climate which was now their own. At the same time, responsible Byzantine observers must

have regarded Hebrew creativity, and the knowledge of Hebrew in general, as a healthy countercheck to the growing linguistic assimilation of the Byzantine-born Karaite youth in the Greek environment.²³⁹

THE LASTING BRIDGE

The Literary Project of the Byzantine Karaites was, then, a Byzantine phenomenon. Here was not a mechanical transplantation of Palestinian teachings into Byzantine soil. It was not a hasty transfer to the West of eastern spiritual Jewish treasures, because of some alleged feeling of impending catastrophe or because of a recognition of the East's inevitable decline.²⁴⁰ Nor was here a missionary scheme, a cunning plan for the "Karaization" of all world Jewry—a plan, which [as is frequently maintained] was supposedly master-minded by the Jerusalem leadership, although the actual performance was left to the instrumentality of Byzantine students and translators.

Here was, we repeat, a genuinely Byzantine development, a local product of adjustment and of integration within local conditions. Here was a development dictated by the sect's interests in Byzantium proper and guided by leaders, themselves Byzantines, who had their Byzantine flock in mind. Of course, the Jerusalem Teachers had a share in that great literary awakening of the Byzantine branch of the movement. Insofar as they personally participated in the business of educating the first leaders of that branch, and insofar as their own creations were translated and read by the Byzantine Karaite public, their contribution to the Byzantine development was of the first order. But it was only an indirect contribution. The sense of need, the initiative, the plan of action, and the performance—they all were the Byzantines' own. They

²³⁹ Cf. above, 200.

²⁴⁰ Such recognition permeates, e.g., the well-known epistle of Maimonides to the community of Lunel. Writing a century after Tobias, Maimonides saw no hope for Judaism in the once-glorious communities of the East, and expected the young Jewries of France, and of Western Europe in general, to take over the responsibilities which formerly were vested in the Jewries under Islām. Cf. the text published by Geiger, in I. Blumenfeld's *Oṣar Neḥmad* (not to be confused with the eleventh-century Karaite work!), II (1857), 3 f., and partly reprinted in Dinaburg [Dinur], *Yisrael bag-Gōlah*, II, Bk. 1, 183: **שלא נשאר בזמן הזה הקשה אנשים להרים דגל משה ולקדקק בדברי דב אשי אלא אתם. [קחל לזניל] ובל העדים אשר סביבותיכם. . . אבל בכל המקומות האלה [=במזרח] אבדה תורה מבנים. רוב המדינות הגדולות מתות ומיעוטן גוססות, ובמו שלשה ארבע מקומות חילים בכל ארץ ישראל, ובבל סוריא מדינה אחת והיא אחלב שבה מקצת חכמים. . . ובבל הגולה בכל ושנער שנים שלשה נדגרים. . . ולא נשאר לנו עזרה אלא אתם.**

It is to be remembered, of course, that Maimonides had little respect for his Rabbanite contemporaries in the Byzantine Empire. Cf. above, 256, note 19.

were developed along lines suiting Byzantine conditions; they answered the local needs of the Byzantine Karaite communities; they addressed themselves to the local Karaite inhabitants and to their non-Karaite neighbors on the Byzantine scene; and they formed the foundation of the Byzantine Karaites' own concept of law and its proper observance.

Indeed, the time has come to view Byzantine Karaite literature not only in the light of other *Karaite* creations the world over, but as part and parcel of *general Jewish creativity in Byzantium*. As such, the Karaite contribution to the entire harvest of Hebrew literature in the Empire—impressive both quantitatively and qualitatively and of more than a passing historical value—may change our general evaluation of the intellectual climate prevailing in Byzantine Jewry on the eve of and during the Crusades.²⁴¹

With the subsequent shift of the centers of general Jewish and Karaite life to non-Arabic-speaking regions, the importance of the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project assumed a new dimension. For this shift caused many an Arabic-written classic in the fields of Jewish law, philosophy and exegesis to fall into oblivion. Frequently, it was not the intrinsic value of an Arabic-composed work but its availability in Hebrew translation that decided its survival and its continued influence on the non-Arabic-reading public. Unwittingly, then—having rendered Arabic Karaite writings into Hebrew in order to serve their *own* local needs—the Karaites of the Empire had performed a significant job of conservation.²⁴²

This accomplishment had far-reaching consequences for the later development of the Karaite sect in the East European part of the continent and for the nature of the sect's spiritual equipment there. Through the Byzantine Hebrew channels, the new outposts of Karaism in the Crimea, in Lithuania, and in Poland could draw freely from the rich classical sources of the Karaite Golden Age. A lasting bridge was thus erected to span the distance in time and space between Palestinian Karaism and the later European extensions of the movement: tenth-century Jerusalem was linked with late medieval Troki and with nineteenth-century Gozlow through the fruitful mediation of the Karaite center in Byzantine Constantinople.

²⁴¹ Cf. above, 171, note 10.

²⁴² Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, 4; Poznański, *Ošar Yisrael*, V, 12b.

EPILOGUE

WHILE ELEVENTH-CENTURY Karaism in Byzantium was forging scholarly and literary tools in order to meet the challenge of its non-Karaite Jewish neighbors and of the Byzantine environment in general, crucial changes occurred on the international scene. These changes catapulted the young community on the Bosphorus into a position of unexpected responsibility and posed before its leadership challenges of a much broader scope.

THE AGE OF THE CRUSADES

The storm descended suddenly. Hardly could the man-in-the-street, whether Rabbanite or Karaite, plying his trade in the Péra suburb or preparing for a commercial voyage in the harbor of Attaleia, foresee the disaster that was to transform the map of the Near East and with it the fate of Jewry in the area. The critical blow came in the year 1071. Along with the Byzantine defeat in Manzikert, which proved a turning-point in the Empire's history, came also the conquest of Jerusalem by the Seljūk Turks.

To be sure, the decline of the Karaite center in the Holy City began even earlier. For reasons which are still unclear, the Karaite Patriarchate had already moved out of Jerusalem in the 1060's and established itself in Fuṣṭāṭ under the auspices of the rich Karaite community there. But it was the Seljūk occupation which brought to a complete standstill all Jewish communal activity in the cities of Jerusalem and Ramlah, in which the majority of the Karaite population was concentrated. Whereas the geonic academy of the Palestinian Rabbanites, having passed to Tyre and Damascus, continued a meager existence under its old name, the Karaite spiritual center in the Bakhtawi Court of Jerusalem was silenced beyond remedy. The Late Golden Age of the Karaite movement came to an abrupt end.

The Fāṭimid reconquest of Jerusalem in 1096 was but of short duration. Three years later the Crusaders entered Jerusalem. The remnants of the depleted Jewish community, comprised of Rabbanites

attitude of the sect's own native membership in Byzantium was concerned, than did the former allegiance to Palestine.

TIME FOR STRUGGLE

This was, then, a time for struggle on three fronts:

Struggle for continuity of a Palestine-oriented Karaism in a world in which Karaite Palestine no longer existed;

Struggle for survival in the face of the growing menace of Rabbinic uniformity, while the uniformity of Karaism, once partly vouchsafed by the Jerusalem center, could not anymore be maintained;

Struggle for self-determination of the Byzantine Karaite center and for its final emancipation from the sect's ties with the East.

From this triple struggle in the generations to come Byzantine Karaism arose victorious. The equipment for that victory was prepared back in the formative years of the sect on the Bosphorus and in the Anatolian communities. It was the eleventh-century leaders, indebted [we remember] to their liberal Jerusalem masters, who had laid the foundations for the future solutions of the crucial problems. True, the edifice built later on these foundations proved considerably different from what the Byzantine Karaite pioneers had originally intended. Processes initiated in the pre-Crusade era tended to run their own unpredicted course and to unharness dynamic forces which responded to new, hardly dreamed-of rules of behavior and development. Tobias ben Moses and his colleagues would no doubt have been surprised and grieved at some of the solutions which evolved from the principles they themselves had established.

But, while subsequent developments diverged in some respects from the intentions of the early ideologists, the eleventh-century foundations proved stronger than their builders knew. In a Jerusalem-less Karaite world, following the 1099 catastrophe, the later Byzantine Karaites found materials ready for devising new compasses to steer them through novel perplexities, and stimuli strong enough for releasing new cohesive forces at the service of the movement.

Further, the heirs to the eleventh-century Byzantine Karaite creativity succeeded in preserving a modicum of creative continuity, in spite of the ever more-engulfing "Rabbinization" of Jewish life. The inevitable Karaite-Rabbanite rapprochement was made into a constructive lever of sectarian advancement; new ways and ideas absorbed from the normative majority were organically woven into the outlook of the sect; and the inescapable

process of fossilization, encroaching on that which remained of the sect's original separateness, was postponed for several more centuries.

Finally, in the intra-Karaite contest for leadership of the Karaite world, Byzantine supremacy asserted itself with full confidence. The vigorous leaders of the Karaite center on the Bosphorus provided the sect with scholarship and guidance which effectively substituted for the light once radiated by the Jerusalem academy. In time, they led the sect into new geographic domains and inspired its members toward new spiritual conquests.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

A comprehensive, classified, up-to-date bibliography of Karaitica is an urgent desideratum. The following Bibliography does not purport to be fulfilling that need, not even with regard to Byzantine Karaism alone. It lists only those sources in the field of Byzantine, Islamic, Karaitic, and general Judaic studies which have been actually quoted in the course of the foregoing research. It amplifies these references by adding details which, for the sake of brevity, had to be omitted from the critical apparatus itself.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that the 550 or so printed entries assembled here will not only assist the student in retracing the documentation on which the present study was based; they may, in their major part, form eventually the foundation for a full-scale bibliography of Byzantine Karaism to be compiled in the future.

Throughout this volume, as well as in the Bibliography, a number of abbreviations were used. The following is the

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bab. Tal.	Babylonian Talmud
Enc. or Enz.	Encyclopedia <i>or</i> Enzyklopädie
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JSS	Jewish Social Studies
MGWJ	Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums
N.S.	New Series
O.S.	Old Series
PAAJR	Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research
REJ	Revue des études juives
RHR	Revue d'histoire des religions
VT	Vetus Testamentum
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZJHB	Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie

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*) Except for the first entry, which was inadvertently omitted from the main bibliography, the works listed herewith are referred to in the Addenda, pp. 485-87.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

- P. 4, note (end). *Add also* N. Wieder's recent essay, "The Dead Sea Scrolls: Type of Biblical Exegesis among the Karaites," in *Between East and West*, 75 ff. (*See also* the addenda below, to pp. 88 f., 94, and 332.)
- P. 20, line 9 from bottom. *For* reported for, *read*: reported in.
- P. 31, note 10 (end). *For* 956, *read*: 960.
- P. 32, end of bottom line. *For* 956 f., *read*: 961.
- P. 34, line 2. *For* possibile, *read*: possible.
- P. 35, line 3 from bottom. *For* pars, *read*: parts.
- P. 38, line 4 of footnote section. *For* Constantinople, *read*: Thessalonica.
- P. 41, note 36. *See also* Ben-Zvi's *Nidhē Yisrael* (2nd ed.), 133.
- P. 44, note 47. *Read*: ben Mu'ammal.
- P. 50, note 63 (line 1). *Read*: ben Mu'ammal.
- P. 50, note 65 (line 4). *Read*: Hōsha'nā.
- P. 55, note 74 (last line). *Before now, insert*: was.
- P. 56, lines 6–10 of the footnote section. *See* the addendum below, to p. 332.
- P. 67, note 21 (line 1). *Read*: *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*.
- P. 68, note 32 (line 2, beginning). *Read*: Courteille.
- Pp. 88 f., note 7. Yefeth's allusions to the Carmathians have now been recalled also by Wieder, in the essay cited in our first addendum, 100 ff.
- P. 94, note 21 (end of second paragraph). *See further* Wieder's essay, cited in our first addendum.
- P. 94, line 11 from bottom. *Read*: Schorstein's.
- P. 112, line 2 from bottom of main text. *Read*: Maeander River.
- P. 121, note 120 (line 2, beginning). *For* VIII (Atlas), *read*: Volume of Maps.
- P. 129, first English paragraph of footnote section (line 6). *For* 1159, *read*: 1156. *See also* on this Seljūq sultan in *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, s.v. Sanjar.
- P. 131, line 25 (beginning). *Read*: strengthened.
- P. 143, line 8 from bottom. *After* Cabrol, *insert*: and H. Leclercq.
- P. 143, note 215 (end). Another recollection of imperial restrictions imposed on the residence of Jews in Constantinople was preserved by Ibn Virga, *Shebeṭ Yehūdah*, Ch. XXVIII (p. 72 in Shohet's edition). Unlike Starr, however (*Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 225, note to No. 176), the editor quite correctly refrained from implying dependence of this source on Benjamin of Tudela.
- P. 146, line 4 (beginning). *For* Marmara, *read*: Bosphorus.
- P. 146, note 229. *See also* R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 418 (under "Galata") and 423 f. (under "Péra").
- P. 150, last line of main text. *For* became, *read*: become.
- P. 150, note 252. Significantly, also Petaḥyah of Regensburg uses the term *galūth* when reporting briefly on the status of Byzantine Jewry. Cf. his *Sibbūb* (ed. Grünhut), Hebrew Section, 36.
- P. 152, note 261. Martino's complaint is quoted here from a MS in the possession of the Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem.
- P. 154, note 269, and p. 162, note 293. Seven years prior to 'Obadyah (1481), Meshullam of Volterra also found 150 Karaite households in Cairo. However, his figure for the Rabbanite population in the city is somewhat different from that registered by 'Obadyah. *See* A. Yaari's edition of *Massa' Meshullam mi-Volterra*, 57, and the plausible interpretation of the data by Strauss [Ashtor], *Tōleodoth hay-Yehūdim be-Miṣrayim we-Sūryah*, II, 419, 428.

- P. 155, note 271 (line 1). *For figuer, read: figure.*
- Pp. 157 f. and 160. My evaluation of Benjamin's population data for Byzantium and for the Muslim side under Egyptian rule does not lend indiscriminate endorsement to all the figures registered by the Spanish traveler in the different sections of his tour. Rather, it calls for discovering in each case the local or regional criteria which guided the traveler or his interlocutors in forming their estimates. J. Prawer's general word of caution (*Zion*, XI [1945-46], 79 f., and note 34) is, of course, well taken; nevertheless, it does not obviate, I believe, the conclusions arrived at in the present instance. On the reliability of the data from Egypt, see also D. Neustadt [*Ayyalon*], *Zion*, II (1937), 221 f. Strangely, however, Neustadt does not multiply Benjamin's figures by three, as customary, notwithstanding his stress of the taxpayers' rolls as the basis for Benjamin's information.
- Pp. 158 f., note 277. I have followed the Adler version (i.e., the British Museum MS) in counting two leaders for Chios, as against the variant in the Asher text. The British Museum MS reading is borne out by the Casanatense MS; it was also accepted by Starr, *Jews in the Byz. Empire*, 232.
- P. 162, note 294 (line 3). *For pehaps, read: perhaps.*
- P. 170, note 7. Jacob ben Reuben's characterizations constitute perhaps the literal Hebrew counterparts of the Greek *δυνατοί* ("the powerful") and *πένητες* ("the poor").
- P. 181, note 47 (end). See also J. Ebersolt, *Constantinople byzantine et les voyageurs du Levant*, 41.
- P. 186, line 17. *For od, read: of.*
- P. 187, last line of main text. *For youth, read: youths.*
- P. 197, line 11 from bottom. *Read: Schorstein.*
- P. 199, bottom line (beginning). *Read: thirteenth.*
- Pp. 211 and 214 (against the claim to infallibility and prophecy). See also *Ḳirḳisānī, Kitāb al-Anwār* (ed. Nemoy), III, 624.
- Pp. 217 f., notes 26-27. See also A. S. Halkin's discussion of the Saadyan position, on the basis of "R. Saadyah Gaon's Introduction to the Commentary on the Pentateuch," in the *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, Hebrew Part, 129 ff.
- P. 242, note 52. See also Sahl ben Maṣliḥ, in *Likḳūṭē*, App. III, 22: כּי גּם דּברי משה (רע"ה מפורשים (*sic!*)).
- P. 245, note 91 (line 2, beginning). *Read: Mu'ammal.*
- P. 260, note 28 (line 4). *For meat-offering, read: meal-offering.*
- P. 274 (on Happarsī and the Sadducees). It is immaterial, at this juncture, whether the medieval authors were right in associating the solar calendar with Yehūdah Happarsī. For all we know, Happarsī may have been merely describing, not endorsing, the ancient procedure. See Poznański's remark to this effect, in *Reshūmoth* (O.S.), I (1918), 215. Nor is it relevant here that *Ḳirḳisānī* and his successors were apparently confusing the Sadducees with the Zadokite [i.e., Qumrān] sectaries (on whom see p. 379, and note 62 there). For it is precisely these *unhistoric* conceptions that molded the views and attitudes of the eleventh-century Karaite and Rabbanite writers which are the subject of our study.
- P. 274, and note 64. Notwithstanding their resemblance, the accounts of *Ḳirḳisānī* and of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah contradict each other. The former, asserting that Benjamin an-Nahāwendī fixed the beginnings of all months (other than *Nisan* and *Tishri*) "by computation," implies a Rabbanite-like pattern of 29 and 30 days, intermittently, rather than equal 30-day mensal units, as clearly stated in the Yeshū'ah text. In fact, even some later passages in the Yeshū'ah fragment proper (cf. p. 178 of Harkavy's edition) lend themselves to a similar interpretation. Thus, while maintaining that "our months of festivals and precepts (חודשי מועדים ומצות),

i.e., *Nisan* and *Tishri*) are subject to lunar observation," Benjamin is reported to have advocated the rule of *חדש אחד שלשים יום וחדש שני עשרים וחשה ימים*. The text clearly needs further elucidation, which, however, cannot be undertaken in this connection. Suffice it to stress here again that precisely its vague formulation influenced the interdenominational polemics of the period under review.

- P. 274, line 4 from bottom (Arabic text). For *العدر*, read: *العدد*.
- P. 279, line 2 from bottom. After *שבת*, insert: *ממש*.
- P. 281, line 10, and line 4 from bottom. Read: *λιτανάβατον*.
- P. 286, last but one line of the main text. Read: *shōḥaṭim*.
- P. 288, line 3 from bottom. For 1899–1900, read: 1900–1.
- P. 290, note 113. For 215, read: 263.
- P. 291, note 115 (line 1). For *agaist*, read: *against*.
- P. 294, note 4 (end). See also M. Zucker's remark in *PAAJR*, XXIII (1954), Hebrew Section, 34 (and note 37).
- P. 298, note 17 (line 1, end). For 1899–1900, read: 1900–1.
- P. 310, and note 43. Al-Ḳūmisī is clearly answering here Pirkōi ben Baboi and kindred Babylono-centrics who interpreted Zech. 2:11 to mean . . . *הוי ציין המלטי יושבת בה בכל. . . ואין ציין אלא ישיבה שמצוינין בתורה ובמצות. . . ואין גאולה באה תחלה אלא ואין ציין אלא ישיבה*. Cf. B.M. Lewin's edition in *Tarbiz*, II (1930–31), 396.
- P. 312, last two lines of main text. For deprecating the glory, read: lifting the burden.
- P. 312, note 46 (line 3). For *יה*, read: *יה*.
- P. 321, note 52 (line 11, beginning). For *באש*, read: *באש-ן*.
- P. 332, lines 9–13 of the footnote section. The same was noticed by Wieder in his recent essay (cited in our first addendum), 98, and note 86 thereto. Wieder identified the Arabic original as Yefeth ben 'Alī's Commentary on Canticles. The indebtedness of Jacob ben Reuben to Yefeth was, indeed, stressed time and time again all throughout this volume.
- P. 345, line 20. For *rotoed*, read: *rooted*.
- P. 347, bottom line (beginning). Read: in connection.
- Pp. 350 f., note 138. In referring to "Hai, the head of the Academy," as Hai ben David, I followed Pinsker's *Likḳūṭē* (whence comes our first quotation). However, Bornstein (*Sokolow Jubilee Volume*, 158, note 1) suggested on excellent grounds that Hai ben Naḥshōn is meant here.
- P. 351, line 10 from bottom. For preferred, read: reproduced from the British Museum MS.
- P. 360, note 14 (beginning). After *Ibid.*, insert: on Leviticus.
- P. 395, top line. Read: that at no time.
- P. 413, bottom line. Add: and in Tobias ben Moses' exhortation quoted above, 250, note 103.
- Pp. 431 f. The importance of Leviticus is also reflected in the long-winded design of Yeshū'ah ben Yehūdah's commentary on that part of the Pentateuch. "The imagination staggers [says J. Leveen, when commenting on the extant fragment] at the size of the complete commentary if one takes this fragment as a criterion of its extensiveness." Leveen explains this phenomenon by pointing to the Karaites' preoccupation with questions of ritual purity which, of course, are dealt with in Leviticus. He overlooks, however, the fact that the third Book of Moses encompasses also the Jewish calendar of fasts and feasts, the dietary rules and the laws of incest and levirate which were of paramount importance in the history of Karaite-Rabbanite polemics. See Leveen's essay on "Saadya's Lost Commentary on Leviticus," in *Saadya Studies* (ed. by E.I.J. Rosenthal), 78 ff.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS TO INDEX

AbE	Aaron b. Elijah	JbR	Jacob b. Reuben
AbJ	Aaron b. Joseph	JeK	Jerusalem Karaite
Bab.	Babylonia, Babylonian(s)	K.	Karaite(s)
Bab-...	Babylonia-, Babylono-...	Km	Karaism
BaJ	Babylonian Jew(s), Babylonian Jewish	Kirk.	Jacob al-Ḳirḳisānī
BaK[m]	Babylonian Karaite(s), Babylonian Karaism	LbY	Levi b. Yefeth
BaM	Babylonian Mishawite(s)	M[m]	Mishawite(s), Mishawism
BaR[m]	Babylonian Rabbanite(s), Babylonian Rabbinism	Mish.	Mishawayh al-'Ukbarī
Bash.	Elijah Bashyachi	MoZ	"Mourners of Zion"
BenN	Benjamin an-Nahāwendī	ON	<i>Oṣar Nehmad</i>
BKLP	Byzantine Karaite Literary Project	Pal.	Palestine, Palestinian(s)
BoT	Benjamin of Tudela	Pal-...	Palestine-, Palestino-...
ByJ	Byzantine Jew(s), Byzantine Jewish	PaK[m]	Palestinian Karaite(s), Palestinian Karaism
ByK[m]	Byzantine Karaite(s), Byzantine Karaism	PaR[m]	Palestinian Rabbanite(s), Palestinian Rabbinism
ByM[m]	Byzantine Mishawite(s), Byzantine Mishawism	R.	Rabbanite(s), Rabbinic
ByR[m]	Byzantine Rabbanite(s), Byzantine Rabbinism	Rm	Rabbinism
Byz.	Byzantine(s), Byzantium	SbM	Sahl b. Maṣliāḥ
Chr.	Christian(s)	SbY	Salman b. Yerūḥam
DaK	Daniel al-Ḳūmisī	SpJ	Spanish Jew(s), Spanish Jewish
EgJ	Egyptian Jews(s), Egyptian Jewish	SpK[m]	Spanish Karaite(s), Spanish Karaism
EgK[m]	Egyptian Karaite(s), Egyptian Karaism	SpR[m]	Spanish Rabbanite(s), Spanish Rabbinism
EgR[m]	Egyptian Rabbanite(s), Egyptian Rabbinism	SyK[m]	Syrian Karaite(s), Syrian Karaism
ELA	<i>Exodus-Leviticus-Anonymous</i>	SyR[m]	Syrian Rabbanite(s), Syrian Rabbinism
J.	Jew(s), Jewish	T[m]	Tiflisite(s), Tiflism
		TbE	Tobias b. Eliezer
		TbM	Tobias b. Moses
		Tifl.	Abū 'Imrān at-Tiflīsī
		YbA	Yefeth b. 'Alī
		YbY	Yeshū'ah b. Yehūdāh

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